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W.R. Scargill

TALES

OF

A BRIEFLESS BARRISTER.

No court
Grants out a writ of summons for the conscience.
I must have witness, and of your producing,
Ere this can come to hearing, and it must
Be heard on oath and witness.

BEN JONSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

3 Vols

I HAVE been on the circuit fifteen years and in the course of that time I have not once had an opportunity of mystifying a jury, of bothering a witness, of being called brother by a judge, or of proving that a dead duck is not a live one.

1.6.47 - Sanders

There was a time, about seven years ago, when I had hopes that my fortune was made. A brief was put into my hands in an action for breach of promise of marriage. The leader in the same action had a violent fit of the tooth-ache, and slight symptoms of the gout to boot; so there was every reason to hope that I should at length let the world know what prodigious

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powers of eloquence I possessed. I had forgot my Greek, or I should have studied a speech or two of Demosthenes; but instead of the philippics of Demosthenes, I read the famous speech of Mr. Philipps in the case of Guthrie v. Sterne. And perhaps that was better; for where there is one jury that understands Greek, there are fifty that may be bamboozled with Irish. All my preparation, however, was in vain. The cause never came into Court. The fee which I received with my brief I lost that selfsame evening at a rubber of whist. I therefore call myself briefless.

But notwithstanding this, I am not weary of the circuit; it is a pleasant thing though not profitable. My legal knowledge is indeed evaporating, but I supply its place by other knowledge. I know many anecdotes of the Bar, and I have seen and conversed with many of the great ones of our day, whose names are in the newspapers, and whose portraits are in the printshops. And the gentry who live in the country pay me

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great respect for furnishing them with anecdotes, and telling them what this or that great man thinks of the national debt or the game laws. But I cannot help observing, that while they are in their way very ready to pay me all proper respect as an acquaintance of some of the great men of the day, they seem to think that I should repay their respect and admiration in kind, and that I should also regard them with reverence, as being in some unintelligible and round-about manner connected with, or allied to, some of the first people in the county. How very vain some people are!

In my intercourse with the gentry of those districts through which I pass, on going the circuit, I have picked up many an entertaining story concerning the queer people in the neighbourhood, and I find that there are more queer people in the world than I had imagined. When I was at school, and for many years afterwards, it was my full persuasion that the country was the abode of innocence, peace, and

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tranquillity. I used to believe that vice and misery, ambition, malignity, duplicity, selfishness, censoriousness, and ten thousand other evils, had no existence but in courts and cities. But as I became familiar with the country, I found that poets did not always tell the truth. What can be their motive for telling so many falsehoods?

I have said that my country friends were in the habit of amusing me with divers stories concerning their neighbours. These stories are all very well in their way to be heard once or twice; but I have heard them so frequently that I begin to grow tired of them. For my own part, I never tell a story twice over to the same person if I can help it; and if I am ever about to tell a story to one who has certainly not heard it, I always make it a point to ask if there is any one in the company who has heard the story before, and then I make an apology accordingly.

But my provincial friends are by no means

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so considerate, for they make me undergo frequent repetitions of the same tales. There is however this to be said, that the repetitions are not unfrequently accompanied with some varieties of circumstance. Whether those varieties arise from fluctuations in the distinctness of recollection, or from a difference in the fertility of invention, I am not prepared to say.

In order to prevent all farther repetition, I shall now give to the world a narrative or two which I have thus picked up in the course of my travels, endeavouring to make the arrangement of the events as lucid and coherent as I possibly can. For having heard the stories told repeatedly, and with variations, I am not quite sure when I am right. Of course, therefore, I am under the necessity of using my own judgment, and exercising a discretion in the selection or rejection of several parts, in order to make the whole more uniform in its aspect and most probable in its bearing. How far I may succeed I cannot even conjecture; for as it

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is sometimes in the power of a well-guided pen to give to pure fiction all the semblance and consistency of truth; so, for want of dexterity and tact, it is also possible so to narrate truth itself that it shall look like a mere clumsy and incoherent fiction. So have I sometimes seen in the course of the circuit several witnesses examined on a trial, and while one impudent, confident fellow, in perfect self-possession, has told a falsehood with all the coolness and coherence and unhesitating fluency of pure truth; another, from clumsiness of apprehension, cloudiness of perception, or constitutional timidity, has floundered and boggled so miserably, that his truth has looked as much like falsehood, as the other's falsehood has looked like truth.

So much for introduction!

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TALES

OF A

BRIEFLESS BARRISTER.

SECOND THOUGHTS ARE BEST.

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SECOND THOUGHTS ARE BEST.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is a remarkably fine and picturesque view of the church and village of Nettlethorpe, from the shop of Simon Sharpe the Blacksmith. Almost every traveller who has a command over his own movements, pauses at that point to admire and enjoy the scenery: and no less than six young gentlemen, and seven young ladies, have, in the course of the last twenty years, attempted to immortalize the beauties of Nettlethorpe in the flowing strains of poesy. But,

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unfortunately, the beauties of that delightful village are such as to defy description. There is a church, with a well-formed spire, and there are houses of various gradations, and there is a small and gracefully undulating stream; there are also modern and recent improvements, symptoms of taste embellishing nature; there is an elegant villa surrounded with a thriving plantation, and seen to very great advantage from that elevation on which the shop and house of the Blacksmith are situated. And there are many other local beauties, which may, perhaps, be also found in a thousand other villages; but everybody who visits Nettlethorpe, and partakes of the hospitality of its inhabitants, concurs in pronouncing it one of the sweetest spots in the kingdom. It often happens that those very scenes which provoke, do also defy description. So it is in the present case.

Whether it be owing to the beauty of the scenery, which, in summer evenings, is pecu-

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liarly attractive; or whether Mr. Sharpe is soon tired of his day's work; or whether the worthy artisan prefers a cool tankard to hot iron; it is a fact, that long before the sun is down, this indispensable operative may be seen sitting on a bench in front of his house, and regaling himself with strong beer and tobacco-smoke. Nor does he always sit alone. Frequently his own meditations are his only company; but sometimes he enjoys a companion or two, who yield a homage of flattering attention to the enunciation of his opinions on men and things, and who are astonished at his wonderful sagacity in foreseeing political changes, which nobody else anticipates.

An operative, who is addicted to political prediction, may be suspected of radicalism; but this is a sin which no one can lay to the charge of Simon Sharpe. He certainly does grumble at the tax-gatherer, and he once had a quarrel with the parson, about the tithe of grass on a meadow of about three acres and

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a half; and he has also been strongly suspected of defrauding the Customs, by purchasing divers parcels of smuggled Hollands. With these exceptions, there cannot be a more loyal subject in his Majesty's dominions. It is his firm, and frequently-expressed opinion, that those discontented ones, who do not like their country, ought to leave it. He entertains a most prodigious horror of the Roman Catholics, which horror is very much strengthened by the fact, that he has never seen one. On this topic he reasons most sagaciously; for having never seen a Roman Catholic, and his abhorrence of them being so great, how much greater would be his abhorrence if he were to see one?

Simon does not ordinarily look like a simpleton; he has a large, round, good-humoured face, which shows more manifest symptoms of easy living than of hard working. But when he attempts to play the oracle, and to look wise, then he sadly fails; for the outside of

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his head is no more calculated for the appearance of thought, than the inside is adapted to the reality.

No one who visits Nettlethorpe can avoid an acquaintance more or less with Simon Sharpe. For the most part, it happens that travellers, who pause on the brow of the hill to admire the scenery of the village, are struck with the easy-looking countenance of the man of iron, and address to him some common-place interrogation, out of mere civility. And it is a great piece of civility, and of condescension too, for an Englishman to address another, and especially one of the lower order. If, however, it should so happen, as of course it sometimes must, that an individual, unusually reserved, pauses on the road to look with eye of admiration on the village scenery, then will Simon thrust his own broad face into the range of the traveller's ken, and if this movement do not provoke the first word, then Simon's tongue will utter it. And few are they who can resist the attack.

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One evening, near the latter end of July in the year 1815, the Blacksmith of Nettlethorpe was sitting on the bench in front of his house, enjoying himself to his heart's content, and descanting to two humble listeners on the great military talents of the Duke of Wellington, when the appearance of a traveller on horseback put a stop to Simon's eloquence. Horse and rider looked equally weary. The traveller turned a hesitating and inquiring look towards the blacksmith's shop, and the blacksmith at the same moment cast a quick professional glance at the horse's feet, and saw that the poor animal had lost a shoe. The traveller observing that the shop was empty, and at the same time catching a glimpse of Nettlethorpe spire, which told him that he was very near to the end of his journey, was about to proceed, when Simon Sharpe hastily started up, announced himself as the blacksmith, and offered his assistance to replace the absent shoe.

Without giving any direct and positive an-

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swer to the application, the traveller, in a languid, but not affected tone, asked, "Is not this Nettlethorpe just before me?"

"That, Sir," replied the blacksmith, "is the village of Nettlethorpe; and I have the honour to be the blacksmith of Nettlethorpe, and the only one you will meet with for several miles. But perhaps you are not going farther than the village, and if so, I can send down to the Duke's Head for your horse."

The stranger, who seemed much more occupied with his own thoughts, than with what Simon Sharpe was saying, dismounted, and gave the horse to the blacksmith, and said, "I will rest myself here while you are replacing the shoe."

As he said this he moved towards the bench which the blacksmith had left, and on which his humble listeners were still seated. They, however, on the approach of a gentleman, very properly quitted their seat, for they were well-informed and well-behaved rustics, and they

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knew how absolutely impossible it was for a gentleman to sit upon the same bench with two common people. From the look of the stranger, any one would have imagined that he would have declined this homage, and would have requested the good people to keep their sitting: for he had an aspect of much gentleness and great good-humour, though he certainly had something of melancholy in his countenance. But he took the seat without appearing to notice the movement that had been made. There he sat in a state of abstraction regardless of all but his own thoughts, and apparently not much occupied with *them*.

When the blacksmith of Nettlethorpe had finished his job, and had brought the horse back to his rider, the stranger started up from his reverie, and looking towards the village, said, "Is there not a gentleman named Stratton living in Nettlethorpe?"

"There is, Sir," replied Simon; "and that

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is his house which you see a little to the left of the church."

The traveller paused as if expecting to hear something more of Mr. Stratton than the bare fact of his residing in Nettlethorpe, and the blacksmith so interpreted the meaning of the pause, and continued accordingly. "A strange kind of gentleman, Sir, is that Squire Stratton; he has lived in this parish near upon twenty years, and nobody seems to know any thing about him. But the family are all in great trouble now; for they have received intelligence from abroad that the eldest son, who was severely wounded at the battle of Waterloo, has since died of his wounds."

At this information the traveller gave his head that kind of movement which is expressive of sympathy, and is a very convenient substitute for moral reflection. But the blacksmith, being one of those who think it a pity to use any substitute for words, proceeded to

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speak more at length concerning this mysterious Squire Stratton. And he gave the traveller pretty good proof, that the gentleman's real history was not very well known, by repeating various extravagant tales concerning him, of which not two could possibly be true, and all might very probably be false. These narrations were not by any means flattering to the person of whom they were spoken; for it is not much the practice of mankind to supply the deficiencies of their knowledge of character, by the exercise of charity or candour. They more frequently imitate the map-makers of old, who filled up gaps with hideous monsters.

When Simon Sharpe had for some minutes indulged his prating propensity, it suddenly occurred to him that the person whom he was addressing might be acquainted with Mr. Stratton. Under this impression, the loquacious blacksmith checked himself, saying, "But all these stories may not be true, Sir; I only tell

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you what I have heard; for my own part, I don't know any harm of him."

The stranger, who had been apparently in a state of abstraction, while the narrator was pursuing his discourse, hereupon hastily started from his reverie, saying, "If you do not know any harm of Mr. Stratton, why do you speak ill of him?"

Without waiting for any answer, the traveller turned his horse's head and departed, leaving the blacksmith cursing, for the five hundredth time, his own unconquerable loquacity, and vowing that he would take especial care never so foolishly to commit himself again.

The individual, who had received from the blacksmith of Nettlethorpe an unfavourable account of Mr. Stratton, soon presented himself at the door of that gentleman's house, and sent in his name as Captain Hartley. It was a long while before Mr. Stratton made his appearance; and the Captain amused himself in the interval

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with the paintings which decorated the apartment into which he had been introduced. These were for the most part family portraits, such as may be seen in ten thousand houses, provoking at once for their likeness and for their want of likeness. It was easy to distinguish among them the portrait of the late Lieutenant Stratton; for, however faintly and feebly the artist might have pourtrayed the person, there was no lack of spirit and fidelity in the delineation of the uniform. From the likeness of the son, the only individual of the family whom Hartley had ever seen, he was readily directed to the portrait of the father. The Captain was not sufficiently skilled in the science of physiognomy to draw any inferences from the aspect of the portrait to the character of the original; but his lack of science did not prevent him from examining the picture with a great semblance of profound investigation. While he was thus engaged, Mr. Stratton himself entered the room; and whether it was

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owing to the emotion which he felt at the sight of his departed son's friend and companion, or whether Captain Hartley was scrutinizing the portrait with more critical looks than were agreeable to the original, it is certain that there was a cloudiness and constrainedness of look in the gentleman, which by no means prepossessed the Captain in his favour. But presently after the first exchange of civilities, the cloud passed away, and the conversation of the parties was unreserved; and Hartley, in his own thoughts, pronounced Mr. Stratton to be a man of most agreeable manners and of excellent understanding.

It was, however, absolutely necessary that the object for which the visit was paid to Nettlethorpe should be mentioned. And while Captain Hartley was painfully and perplexedly meditating how he should introduce the subject in a way least likely to awaken acute feelings, Mr. Stratton saved him from much difficulty by saying—'And now, Sir, may I be per-

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mitted so far to indulge a father's feelings, as to make some inquiries concerning my dear boy's last moments?"

Though Mr. Stratton began this short sentence with much firmness, and with a cadence which indicated that more was about to be uttered, his lips quivered before he had finished, and he paused, abruptly turning away his face and hiding his falling tears.

"Your son, Sir," replied Captain Hartley, "died as he had lived, nobly and honourably; and he has left an unblemished name."

While the Captain was speaking, the emotion of the bereaved father increased, and before the sentence was finished, Mr. Stratton, without turning his face towards the speaker, caught hold of his hand, and with much energy interrupted him, saying, "Yes, yes, Sir, I know it! *His* name was indeed unblemished."

The singular and decided emphasis which was given to the word *his*, and the unusual agony of spirit with which the father alluded

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to his deceased son, distressed Captain Hartley, and drove him, in spite of himself, to uncandid suspicions. The language of the blacksmith returned to his recollection, and he was beginning to believe that there was some foul blemish in the character of Mr. Stratton. So painful and perplexing was this suspicion, that it put a complete stop to the conversation, and both parties sat for some minutes in a most embarrassing silence. Captain Hartley made several efforts to speak, but all in vain. His voice would not obey his will, and his words would not come at his command. At length silence was broken by the afflicted parent, and many questions were asked, and the answers to them were honorable to the departed, and consolatory to the mourner.

And when these inquiries were finished, and Mr. Stratton had heard from the friend and companion of his son, such an account of that son's excellent conduct as might by a parent be pleasingly remembered, the conversation again

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became general, and Mr. Stratton again appeared to the Captain as a man of good sense and good feeling. To an invitation to spend a few days at Nettlethorpe the Captain gave an answer of ready acceptance, and he was forthwith introduced to the rest of the family, which consisted only of Mrs. Stratton and two daughters. It was very obvious that the mother had in her youth been handsomer than either of her daughters, but it was also manifest that the young ladies were by no means deficient in personal beauty.

Although the melancholy event which brought Captain Hartley to Nettlethorpe, was not by any means calculated to lead them to put on their gayest looks, yet in their subdued sorrow there was a gracefulness which gave them an interest far beyond the power of gaiety and joy. They had never seen Captain Hartley before, nor were they at all acquainted with his family or kindred: but they had heard much of him from their brother, who had been in his letters

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most lavish in the praises of his friend and almost only companion. Therefore, when they saw the friend of their brother, while they had tears starting at the recollection of the departed, they had looks of gratitude for the kindness of the survivor.

Hartley could not but be struck by the peculiarly graceful demeanour of the sisters of his friend; and had there been upon his mind any painful and disagreeable impression from the strange and mysterious manner of their father, that impression must have faded away entirely before the influence of the truly graceful and interesting manners of the daughters. In the world, and by frequent converse with it, the forms and visible exhibitions of courtesy may be very completely learnt; but the substance of courtesy may exist in solitude, and when it does there exist, it is developed by expressions of its own prompting, and not artificially contrived: then it is most truly fascinating and impressive; then does it differ from and exceed the

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conventional politeness of society, as much as the brilliancy of genius transcends the pedantry of ponderous erudition.

The rest of the day was spent as agreeably as could be expected with a family mourning a serious loss.

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CHAPTER II.

It is wise in society to fix and determine certain forms of mourning. Were it not for this arrangement, there would be all manner of extravagances and indecorums. There would be a wild and irrational rivalry of grief, and there would perhaps be most extravagance where there was least feeling, in order to conceal that want of feeling. Now, when a family wears black, that family is acknowledged and recognized to be in mourning. There may be no difference in their looks or their ordinary conversation from the rest of the world; but the attention is fixed upon the dress, while the countenance and manners are not scrutinized. Often-

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times the acuteness of sorrow is past before the black has lost its first gloss, and oftentimes the mourning garb is laid aside, when for years afterwards there are sad regrets lying heavily upon the heart.

In those families which are orderly in their habits, serious in their pursuits, and somewhat secluded from the world, a loss by death, though it may make a deeper impression on the minds of the individuals, makes at the same time a less alteration in the general habits and aspect of the family. They who are intemperately gay when out of mourning, are most constrainedly grave when they are in mourning.

The family of Mr. Stratton was of remarkably retired habits. Mrs. Stratton was said to be so exceedingly nervous as not to be able to bear company. But no symptoms of this nervousness were visible to Captain Hartley. To him the lady appeared as a person of agreeable and unaffected manners, and though not of the very highest order of female intellect, yet as possess-

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ing a good natural understanding, not quite so cultivated, however, as might have been expected in her situation. But the young ladies were clearly of a higher order of intellect, and of far more extensive information. Their manners were good, and the style of their minds were peculiarly well fitted to appear to advantage under circumstances of mourning. As black is a becoming dress only to the most graceful outward form, so does seriousness require a superior mind in orrder to be shown to advantage.

The transition from a camp and a field of battle to a quiet and secluded family, holding scarcely any intercourse with the world, was to Captain Hartley a change which produced its full effect upon him. He had never been a man of intemperate habits or of boisterous manners, but had passively enjoyed the society in which his profession had placed him. A natural and constitutional propriety of feeling rendered him gay with the gay, but not the gayest among

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the gay. In society he had not been accustomed to sigh for solitude; and the profession which he had adopted, being the result of his own free choice, he bore its inconveniences without restlessness and uneasiness. But when the tumult was over, and when he had experienced the stimulating sensations of victory, and had felt the sorrow of losing a valued friend, then a change of life produced a feeling of repose most requisite in its calmness. He was pleased with every thing around him. The very house in which he was visiting appeared to his eyes as being built in the purest taste, and furnished with the utmost propriety, and situated in a most beautiful country. The whole domestic establishment appeared to him as the perfection of order and neatness and real comfort. And when he conversed with the family, and found them, especially the father and daughters, so very well informed, and so happy in their choice of language and mode of utterance, he was not much surprised that

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they kept themselves aloof from the people of the village and the neighbourhood. He thought that they must feel their superiority to the society by which they were surrounded. It was also very delightful to see how respectfully and affectionately the young ladies behaved to their mother; and though Mr. Stratton did betray occasional symptoms of haughtiness of feeling and impetuosity of temper, yet it was manifest that his good sense curbed his temper, and that his uniform feeling towards his family was of kindness and consideration. It was also pleasing to Captain Hartley to observe, that though the family deeply felt the loss which they had sustained, yet they were not intemperate in their grief or irrational in their mourning; for they delighted to speak of him that was gone, and they spoke of him with a sober approbation; and if occasionally a tear or two fell while they were speaking of him, it was wiped away without interruption to the conversation or pain to the spectator. Perhaps the Captain was not

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a little flattered that his own narratives were listened to with an eager and unwearied attention; for he had a happy art of giving interest to a story without aiming at extravagance or deviating from simplicity.

But pleasantly as the time passed, there was necessity for bringing the visit to a close. Captain Hartley had fulfilled his commission, by giving to the family of his deceased friend a most ample and particular account of his last days; and the account had been given with so much true feeling, and with such considerate kindness of manner, that every individual of the family felt towards him as a friend whom they had known for years. So, on the evening of the day which preceded his departure, when he announced his intention of leaving Nettlethorpe on the following morning, there was a general and simultaneous expression of concern, and a more than ordinary earnestness of persuasion was used with a view of prevailing upon him to prolong his visit.

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"If you can, without any great inconvenience, prolong your stay for a few days more," said Mr. Stratton, "we shall be most happy in your company. We have not much amusement to offer you, for we live quite secluded. And, indeed, under present circumstances, we cannot well avail ourselves of the little company which we might collect."

There was an embarrassment of manner in uttering this sentence, which led Captain Hartley to think that there must be something wrong in the family, or some reproach cleaving to some individual in it; there was a mystery implied in the cadence with which Mr. Stratton uttered the words, "the little company which we might collect;" and there was, at the same time, something in the looks of the female part of the family, by which the Captain was convinced that there were peculiar causes which kept the neighbours aloof from the family. For his own part, however, he was well pleased with all that he had witnessed while at Nettlethorpe,

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and not being greatly addicted to curiosity as concerning the affairs of his neighbours, those appearances, which excited suspicion, did not stir up any great degree of anxiety to penetrate the mystery.

No solicitations had power enough to move him from his purpose of departing on the following morning; and, as the prospect of a journey had a little disturbed and shortened his repose, he made his appearance in the breakfast-room rather earlier than the family. That was the room into which he had first been introduced; and, in order to while away the minutes of waiting for his friends, he applied himself, as at his first appearance in that room, to gaze at the family portraits. There was among them one which, by its strong resemblance to Mr. Stratton, was evidently designed for one of the family, but it was one of whom no mention had been made amidst all their conversation. By the dress and obvious date of the picture, it seemed to have been intended for a younger

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brother of Lieutenant Stratton. It was either a very flattering picture, or the likeness of a remarkably fine young man. The Strattons were a fine family, and this portrait, if by any means faithful, was a specimen of the finest of them. Captain Hartley had before observed the picture, and he had also taken notice, that whenever he had fixed his eyes upon it, some question or remark was sure to be addressed to him by one or other of the family, as if with a view of drawing away his attention, or preventing him from asking any question concerning the original. As he was a man of delicate feeling, the hint, however remote, was sufficient to keep him from speaking on the subject; but the very pains which he took to avoid appearing to notice the picture, led him to direct his eye more frequently to that spot.

He had therefore taken it for granted, that if his departed friend had ever had a brother, he had been lost to the family for some time. But, as if to repay himself for his abstinence in

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withholding his gaze from the picture when the family was present, he now, at the moment of his departure, and when quite alone, gazed most attentively and studiously at it, and he felt satisfied that the portrait was one of Mr. Stratton's family; and, notwithstanding a general want of curiosity, he did feel some curiosity to lift up the veil of mystery which hung over this nameless picture.

This curiosity was presently gratified by the entrance of Mr. Stratton into the breakfast-room. He walked silently up to Captain Hartley, and was not observed till he laid his hand on the gentleman's shoulder. The Captain started and looked confused, but presently recovering from his embarrassment, he paid the usual morning salutation.

"Captain," said Mr. Stratton, "I have long observed that your curiosity has been excited by that picture. Have you ever seen the original?"

"I have seen no one more like that picture

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than my departed friend, but I see that there is another portrait more obviously designed for him."

Mr. Stratton shook his head and replied, "It is a painful thing to lose a child under any circumstances, but if the original of that portrait had died as his brother has, I should look upon that canvass with very different and far more pleasing emotions."

The appearance of the other part of the family put a stop to the conversation for the time, but Mr. Stratton just said, "I must have a word or two more with you on that subject before we part."

Whether breakfast is the most serious and silent meal, because it is the first, or because it is the soberest, is difficult to say, but it generally does pass without much talk, or at all events, without much talk that is worth recording. Punsters very seldom pun at breakfast, and the narrators of long-winded stories are at that time more sparing of their tales. There is then sel-

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dom any argumentative discussion or any play of wit. Breakfast is altogether a matter of business, an affair of life and death, because, if people did not break their fast, they could not live. Dinner is quite another thing; that is more a matter of pleasure than of business; and they who speak of the pleasures of the table, are supposed to allude to dinner, and not to breakfast. A man may dine with Duke Humphrey five days in the week, but it is a much more serious matter to breakfast with Duke Humphrey.

Be this however as it may, it is a fact that breakfast did on the occasion alluded to pass off very silently, and as appeared to Captain Hartley, somewhat more silently than usual. Indeed, for his own part, he had not much appetite for talk. His mind was full of expectation, which by the way is but an empty kind of fullness. When breakfast was finished, Mr. Stratton took Captain Hartley into the library, and

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began his narrative concerning the mysterious picture

"I feel impelled, Sir, though I scarcely know upon what principle, or from what cause, to speak to you confidingly on the subject of that portrait, which seems to have attracted so much of your notice. I have several times thought of removing it, but I have about me an unaccountable, superstitious fear of doing so, though I cannot generally accuse myself of strong propensities to superstition. The painting, as you may see by its resemblance to my departed son, is done for one of my family. It is a likeness, and I think a fair likeness, of my youngest and now only son."

Captain Hartley was going to speak, but Mr. Stratton interrupted him.

"Excuse me, Sir, if I beg that you will let me tell my own story without interruption; you may perhaps be of service to me. That portrait, as I said, is a portrait of my only sur-

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viving son. You have heard us make no mention of his name, and the reason of that silence is, that to mention his name would be to recall painful feelings. He is living, but where or how I know not."

There was a pause, and Captain Hartley, mindful of the request to abstain from interrupting the narrator, made no audible remark, but his look of astonishment seemed to ask if the father did not care any more than he knew where and how his son was living. Mr. Stratton interpreted the question implied in the look, and answered it accordingly.

"I have not forsaken my child, but he has most unaccountably and unwarrantably withdrawn himself from my protection. He has been away from home upwards of four years, and for the greater part of that time has subsisted independently of me. I have made every endeavour to recall him, and once or twice in the interval I have seen him. He has contracted debts, which I have paid; and I have

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also, by various means, conveyed occasionally supplies to him. If I knew, or could by any means ascertain, what is his favourite pursuit, I would indulge him in it to any extent; but the evil is, that he is an extravagant in every thing, and steady to no one purpose or pursuit whatever. He has been seen in such various and opposite circumstances, that the narration of his history would, while it makes a parent weep, make a stranger smile. He is altogether a being of impulses, and seems to have no command over the movements of his own mind; and yet it would be difficult to procure sufficient evidence to take out a statute of lunacy against him.

"When he first left home he was under sixteen years of age. His appearance was, however, of a person at least one-and-twenty. Then he had a passion for the stage. Of course, I opposed him; but he suffered, in order to gratify his ruling passion, a long series of painful mortifications and privations, and I thought

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that sorrow had subdued him. He sent me by a private hand a penitential letter. In that letter was an eloquence far beyond his years. I was moved and melted. I saw him, and was shocked at his appearance. I provided him with the comforts of which he stood in immediate need, and I expected that on the following day he would accompany me home, but in the morning he was not to be found. I returned home as miserable as a disappointed father can possibly be. Nearly two years elapsed, and, in the bitterness of my soul, I was tempted to wish that the next place in which I might see him should be his coffin. At the end of that interval I saw him once more, and then he had been, how long I know not, wandering about the country with a gang of gypsies.

"The interview which I then had with him was accidental. Though he had been suffering many privations, and bore symptoms of hard living, yet his spirit was not humbled and subdued as it had been when he wrote to me from

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his wandering theatre. Instead of professing any contrition for his follies, or expressing any wish to return to the quietness and respectability of home, he actually pretended to justify the choice of life which he had made; and I do assure you, Sir, he did speak on the subject with so much fluency, and with such a plausibility of argument, as showed that he was absolutely sincere in what he said and did. He is certainly, though I say it, a youth of uncommon and most powerful talents.

"I could not, of course, countenance him in that pursuit; but I then told him, that if he really did feel a strong propensity to go upon the stage, rather than he should be a houseless vagabond, I would have him properly instructed, and regularly brought out at any respectable theatre, provincial, or metropolitan, as he might choose. He then professed to think that the stage was an immoral pursuit, and that it tended to strengthen and countenance the artificial state of society, which

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was destructive of the natural dignity and simplicity of the human character. He told me that he considered the life which the gypsies led was the most natural and independent. That theirs was the original mode of living of all mankind, and that it excluded numerous vices which disgraced civilized society. And when I told him of the dangers to which he was exposed of violating the laws, by trespassing upon the rights of property, he actually had the effrontery to tell me, that those who had established what are called the rights of property, had, in so doing, violated and invaded the general rights of mankind; and that the gypsies were people of great moderation, in taking so small a share of what belonged to them by the constitution of nature.

"I cannot pretend to give you any thing like the language in which he was pleased to defend himself; and you may very well suppose that I did not deign to enter into an argument with him; but I peremptorily told

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him, that unless he would return home with me, I must abandon him, and renounce him altogether. To this he replied, with a calmness which cut me to the very soul, that, to speak most properly, he had renounced me; and that, as I was no farther necessary to him, he would not trouble me any longer. He talked as if the human race were no better than the brutes. Since that time I have not seen him, but I have occasionally heard of him by means of one friend or another; and I have heard that sometimes he has been exhibiting himself as a mountebank at fairs; at another, that he has been preaching in the fields as a methodist; and again, he has been employed in London as a corrector of the press; and that, for a very little while, he was an assistant in a school.

"The last account that I had of him was, that he was in London, and was in some employment or other connected with the theatres. I think, Captain Hartley, from what I have

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heard you say, that you may be acquainted with some gentlemen who may give you information of my poor boy. I cannot renounce him; and, unless some change takes place in him, I know not what will become of him."

When Mr. Stratton had finished his narration, Captain Hartley expressed a feeling of sympathy with the unhappy father, and promised that he would use his utmost diligence to discover the young man's abode, and to bring him to rational conduct. The Captain then took his leave of the family at Nettlethorpe, and made the best of his way to London.

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CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN HARTLEY was not a man of high family, or a man of large fortune. His parents, whohad died when he was young, had left him to the guardianship of an uncle, who was altogether a man of business, and who had a family of his own. And when the uncle undertook the guardianship of the lad, it was on the express condition that the boy should be left to his own choice as to his pursuit in life, and should receive an education accordingly, to be paid for out of the means left by his father, and that the remainder of the property should be paid over to the young man as soon as he should arrive at the age of twenty-one.

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Now, as both father and uncle were city men, it never entered the minds of either, that choice of pursuit, though left unlimited, could ever have wandered to a greater latitude than a choice between a shop or a warehouse. How the lad could ever think of the army, neither uncle nor aunt could conjecture; for they knew that he had never seen any thing more of military affairs than the East India Company's volunteers marching magnanimously round the Shepherd and Shepherdess-fields in the City-road. From whatever source the passion sprung, so it was, that the young gentleman insisted on being provided with the means of entering into the army.

What made the choice more remarkable was, that the manners of the young gentleman were very mild and gentle, and his habits generally quiet and retiring. His wishes, however, were not opposed, and he entered the army accordingly. He felt himself at first somewhat awkward from being placed among young men

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of family and fortune; but the only individual in the regiment from whom he experienced any thing like arrogance, was the son of a village apothecary, who priding himself upon being the son of a professional man, looked down with contempt upon Hartley as the son of a shopkeeper. The other officers being gentlemen by manners as well as by birth, and seeing that he did not show himself meanly ashamed of his origin, or weakly proud of his profession, behaved towards him with kind and liberal feelings.

After he had been in the regiment for some time, Lieutenant Stratton joined it; and between these two a friendship was formed which terminated only with the death of the latter. Lieutenant Stratton had frequently in his letters to his family mentioned the name of his valued friend; and had, in a letter written after his fatal wound was received, informed his father, that, in the event of his death, he had commissioned Captain Hartley to go to Nettlethorpe, and to give a verbal account of the last

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moments of his life. There is no necessity for any farther account of Captain Hartley previous to his introduction on these pages. The narrative may therefore proceed intelligibly without any more retrospection.

When Captain Hartley arrived in town, he very properly paid his respects to his city relatives, and they, notwithstanding the abhorrence in which they had held his military propensities, were exceedingly proud of their nephew. Uncle and aunt and cousins paid him the homage of flattering attentions, and as they were very loyal people, they failed not to be loud and warm in praise of the heroes of Waterloo. It was as much as the Captain could possibly do in the way of entreaty and argument, to prevent his uncle from dignifying his shop by the epithet of "Waterloo House." Over and over again did he tell his respected relative, that there was no connexion whatever between measuring tape in Houndsditch, and routing the French at Waterloo. Hartley, indeed, admitted

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that his uncle had as much right as any one to adopt that designation for his shop; but he observed at the same time, that the expense of a new board with large gilt letters would never answer, and that, in all probability, the same title would be given to all manner of trumpery, catch-penny shops, so that the very name of Waterloo on a shop-window would become ridiculous. In this last conjecture he has been perfectly right.

The uncle, whatever he might think of his nephew's want of prudence in entering the army, was mightily proud of his nephew the Captain. It was amusing to observe with what glee and cordiality the old gentleman introduced his heroic relative to all his friends and acquaintance; and it was pleasant also to see how puzzled divers of these friends and acquaintance were to see so mild, quiet, and unassuming a personage introduced to them as a military hero just fresh from the field of battle, and covered with the laurels of recent victory.

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It does sometimes happen that they who make a noise in the world are very quiet kind of people.

The gaieties and entertainments to which Hartley was introduced by his admiring relative, were not of a nature to afford a very lasting gratification to a man of such taste and habits as he, and he was therefore very glad to make an occasional escape from the importunities of oppressive hospitality.

There is certainly much in the character of a well-doing citizen of London, that is truly respectable; there is oftentimes an honourable generosity and munificent liberality, and there lacks not in many cases a very respectable share of information, a shrewdness of penetration, and a solidity and acuteness of judgment; but it is an acknowledged evil in large and opulent mercantile places, that the general ambition is directed to the grossness and crudeness of physical enjoyment and vulgar splendour. A great deal has been said about the Lord Mayor's

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coach, that the magnificence of it is a kind of homily to young apprentices and juvenile shopkeepers, exhorting and stimulating them to diligence in business, and steadiness in moral conduct, that they, also, in their turn, may have the praise and glory of riding in so fine a carriage. But the carriage is too heavy, and it certainly corrupts the taste of the citizens. Then again, the other glories of the mayoralty and delights of civic eminence, such as sumptuous feastings and gorgeous balls, all these things appearing as the end of mercantile diligence, give to the mind a degree of grossness in its ambitions, which is by no means favourable to the perfection of human nature. Therefore, notwithstanding that some individuals who have withdrawn themselves, and escaped from the heavier atmosphere of the city, have wittily and smartly ridiculed others who have attempted to tread in the same steps; it may be asserted, that they who have business in the city, act wisely in seeking to divest themselves as much as pos-

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sible of its grossness, and in endeavouring after some more refined and liberalizing pleasures.

The taste of Captain Hartley was not by any means a city taste. Sumptuous and expensive eating and drinking did not give him much pleasure; and therefore having a commission to seek out the wandering and lost son of Mr. Stratton, and also meditating a change of profession, he found means of removing from the hospitalities of Houndsditch, and fixing himself in lodgings somewhere to the west of Temple Bar.

He was not long in solitude. The accidental meeting with an old acquaintance brought him into the society of many new acquaintances, and some of them seemed not unlikely to assist him in his search after the wanderer. By their means the Captain was brought to the knowledge of many modes of life and forms of human character to which he had been heretofore a stranger. He then saw, what he had often heard of and scarcely believed,—he saw that many a gay-look-

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ing, well-dressed, high-talking man, whose air and manners had enough of grandeur to indicate the possessor of a palace, was the tenant of a scantily furnished and scarcely weather-proof lodging. Some of these he found to be men of high intellectual endowments, and of great conversational powers, and he thought that their talents deserved a better fate. But a short acquaintance solved the difficulty and explained the mystery.

To one of these gentlemen he was indebted for the discovery of Frederick Stratton. The circumstances were as follows. The Captain had been spending the evening with a party of a very miscellaneous nature, and in the course of the evening had conversed with several individuals, but more especially with a Mr. Theodore Clarke, whom he had met on former occasions. This Mr. Clarke, finding that his discoursings were attentively heard, pronounced the Captain to be one of the most sensible men he had ever conversed with, and to show his

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gratitude for the attention so afforded, he became doubly eloquent. And when they found that it was time that they should quit the party, their discourse was in the height of its interest and the flower of its eloquence; so it fell out that Theodore and the Captain walked out of the house together.

Theodore, though a young man of great genius, was not by any means the soberest man in the world. He owed much to natural talent and power, but his eloquence was indebted for much of its brilliancy to the artificial stimulus of wine, or some of its humbler substitutes. And when he was under the influence of this stimulus, he was eloquent, heroic, generous, communicative, candid, patriotic, and all that is good. By the impulse of this excitement, he took hold of Captain Hartley's arm, as they quitted the house, and said—

"Captain, I envy you: what a happy man you must be to have been in that glorious battle of Waterloo! I admire the military character

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above all conditions of human life. In all other professions there is something of the meanness and lowness of mere selfishness and money-getting. The lawyer, for instance, pleads most eloquently, argues with logical accuracy, strains every nerve, rises to the sublime, or revels in the ludicrous, and seems to think only of his client's interest when all his thoughts are on his fee."

"Take care of that post," said Captain Hartley.

"Thank you, Captain. Well, as I was saying, all other professions are selfish. Look at the medical, and look at the clerical? But I hate common-place declamation. Now the military man is altogether and diametrically opposite to all this. Even the man of genius, high-born or low-born, will haggle for the price of a manuscript. But the profession of arms is all honour —pure honour, and high spirit. Its very characteristic is to esteem life as nothing, and honour as every thing."

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"You are quite complimentary, Mr. Clarke," said the Captain, who thought that he ought to say something, but felt as if he should be very glad to get rid of his talking companion.

"Not at all, not at all," replied Theodore, who was most happy to hear the sound of his own voice.

"But, suppose," said Hartley, "that I should relinquish the military and adopt some other profession."

"Then you would carry the same high and honourable spirit into any other profession that you might adopt."

"Then you will allow the possibility of honourable and disinterested principle in other professions besides the military?"

"Oh, most undoubtedly. There is no rule without exceptions. I am acquainted with many men of genius, the most disinterested creatures in the world; with powers capable of anything, yet content to live in obscurity

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because they will be independent. If you are not engaged for the rest of the evening, I can introduce you to some of my friends." At this moment St. Giles's clock struck twelve; and the Captain smilingly said; "I think the evening is pretty well spent already. Did you hear what the clock struck?"

"To be sure I did, it is only twelve, and I dare say my friends are but now beginning to spend the evening. They can but have just left the theatre.

Hearing mention of the theatre, Hartley thought that he might have an opportunity of tracing out Frederick Stratton, and therefore suffered himself to be led through various dark, narrow, and unfragrant streets, into which, without a companion, he would scarcely have dared to venture, and out of which, without a guide, he could scarcely have found his way. After a tedious, though not very long walk, the party arrived at a public-house, or coffee-house, into which they entered with very differ-

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ent emotions; for Theodore Clarke felt himself quite at home, and Captain Hartley most sincerely wished himself at home. Not that he was afraid—captains are never afraid—but he could not help thinking that he was about to be introduced to very strange company, and he certainly would have preferred day-light to candle-light in his pursuit of Frederick Stratton.

The Captain and his companion were shown into a long low room, filled with a dull and smoky atmosphere. A nose of great discrimination might therein have discerned the various odours of gin, rum, tobacco, toasted cheese, and strong beer; an eye of penetration might through the lurid atmosphere have seen countenances of varied character, all singular in their way; but no power of hearing, however discriminating, could make head or tail of what the miscellaneous host was talking about.

As they entered the apartment, the Captain

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looked about him, as well as the smoke would let him, to see if there were any individual in the room at all resembling the portrait which he had seen at Nettlethorpe. But he did not feel much confidence in the power of reasoning under the circumstances in which he then saw the company. Several persons addressed themselves familiarly to Theodore Clarke, who introduced them by name to his friend Captain Hartley, one of the heroes of Waterloo. But most of them seemed to think that a genius with a cigar in his mouth was a person of more consequence than one of the heroes of Waterloo.

Almost mechanically, the Captain yielded to the entreaty of his friend to be seated. Presently there came and sat opposite to them a thin, semicircular figure of an elderly man, whose hair, beard, and coat, were grey with age; whose waistcoat and nether garments were brown with snuff, and whose shoes and stockings were miscellaneous from mending, and in-

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dependent of strings and garters. Theodore Clarke immediately greeted him most familiarly, and said, "Allow me to introduce to you my friend Captain Hartley."

The old gentleman bowed and pulled out his snuff-box. Theodore then went through the form of saying, "Captain Hartley, Dr. Grimwood; Dr. Grimwood, Captain Hartley." Then, of course, the Captain bowed to the Doctor, and the Doctor bowed to the Captain. But whether the Doctor was of law, physic, or divinity, was not readily ascertainable. It was, however, very presumable from his appearance, that he had not been so very attentive to what is called the main chance, as Theodore, in his recent declamation, had affirmed concerning the generality of professional men.

"You have been at the theatre to-night, I suppose, Doctor," said Mr. Clarke; "was there any tolerable acting?"

"None, I protest," replied the Doctor: then addressing himself to the Captain, he continued,

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"I remember the time when the theatres were attended for the sake of the acting; when the poet and the player filled the house; but that day is past. Now, the great attraction is found in the art of the scene-painter, the handy work of the tailor, the gorgeous and silly decorations which dazzle the eye and corrupt the taste. Formerly, the attraction was of the ear, now it is of the eye. But there is no use in complaining. The case is the same in every thing else; this is the age of externals and superficiality; and so far from any prospect of a change for the better, we seem to be growing worse and worse."

"Well, Doctor," replied Mr. Clarke, "when your new tragedy comes out, all these evils will be rectified."

The Doctor smiled, and said, "Yes, yes, if it ever does come out; but the faction, I fear, will not suffer it to be acted. The managers and the performers and the public are all in favour of pantomime; and no wonder, for there is not a

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single actor at either house that is fit to be trusted with a respectable character in a legitimate drama."

"But what progress have you made in your work?"

"Why, as to that," replied the Doctor, "I cannot say I have done much to it of late. I have not quite made up my mind as to the catastrophe, and I have some doubts concerning two or three of the characters, that I thought of introducing. Indeed, I have once or twice had serious thoughts of giving up the idea of a tragedy, and of writing a genteel comedy instead. And to tell you the truth, and I hope you will not let it go any farther, I have already made considerable progress in a comedy; but some of the sentiments are so liberal, that I very much fear that there will be great difficulty in getting it licensed."

"And will you throw your tragedy quite away?"

"Not exactly so, I shall lay it aside only for

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awhile, and perhaps, when I have published my epic poem, if that has much of a run, I may see what I can do in the way of tragedy. The managers, then, perhaps may run after me, instead of my running after them."

"Very good, very good," responded Theodore Clarke; and turning to Captain Hartley, he said, "Suppose we call for a bottle of wine, and drink success to Dr. Grimwood's new comedy. What is the title to be, Doctor?"

The Doctor smiled, and said, "That is a secret at present." Then, after a little more hesitation, he added, "Why, to say the truth, I have not quite made up my mind about the title."

Then Theodore Clarke smiled, and poured out a glass of wine, and handed it to the Doctor, who observed that it was growing late, and that he must be up early the next day, because he had an engagement to meet a gentleman, who had promised to assist him in compiling a county history.

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But that will interfere with your comedy, Doctor," said Mr. Clarke.

"By no means; it will rather assist me, for it may suggest some curious incidents and amusing situations."

"Very true," replied Mr. Clarke.

"Very strange," thought Captain Hartley.

While this talk was going on, and much more, manifesting the versatile talents and digressional genius of Dr. Grimwood, the watchful and observant eye of Hartley discerned at a distant part of the room, through the then subsiding cloud of smoke, a figure and countenance bearing, as he thought, no slight resemblance to the portrait of Frederick Stratton. The person to whom the Captain's attention was directed, was sitting alone, with his arms folded across his breast, and his eyes fixed upon the ceiling, apparently and almost studiously inattentive to all that was passing in the room. Hartley observed that, though several persons looked at him, they did not seem to regard him as a stranger.

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Presently Theodore Clarke, directed his eye to that part of the room, and then he slightly touched the Doctor's arm, and pointed out the person to him. Some few words passed in a low tone between Mr. Clarke and Dr. Grimwood, enough to satisfy Hartley that they were in some sort acquainted with the gentleman. He therefore, in a whisper, asked Mr. Clarke if he knew who that person was sitting in such an attitude of abstraction.

"That gentleman," replied Clarke,—"for he really is a gentleman by birth,—is one of the greatest paradoxes in town. He is absolutely uninterpretable. He is a very young man, but as full of information as if he had spent a long life in study. He *can* do every thing, and *will* do nothing. Some time ago he took it into his head to carry about in his pocket, and to offer to every man he could speak to, proposals for publishing a cheap edition of Paine's Age of Reason, and before he had well disposed of his prospectuses, he was seen by my friend Dr.

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Grimwood preaching in the fields near White Conduit House, and predicting that the world would be at an end in less than six months. To talk of him, you would think him deranged; but to talk with him he seems as cool and as rational and as capable of an argument as one in the healthiest state of mind. I have known him about ten or twelve months; and I have never found him for a month together in the same mind. His friends, he tells me, are desirous of confining him; but certainly he is by no means mischievous, and he is perfectly competent to take care of himself. He has written several clever things for some of the minor theatres, and is equal to any thing if he had but perseverance."

The account thus given, and the appearance of the person, convinced Captain Hartley that it could be no other than Frederick Stratton. Not willing, however, to excite suspicion, he merely said, "I think it must be amusing to have an acquaintance with so singular a genius."

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"I can introduce you, if you please. He is a very accessible man, and he will be as intimate with you after an acquaintance of ten minutes as of ten years. He has not the slightest degree of reserve."

"Thank you," said Hartley; "I shall have much pleasure in an acquaintance with him."

"It may be better perhaps to wait till to-morrow morning," replied Mr. Clarke, "for, judging from his present appearance, he seems to have taken a little too much to-night, and I am afraid he will not show to advantage now. Will you call at my lodgings to-morrow morning about twelve o'clock, and then I will take you with me."

"Shall we be sure to find him at that time?"

"Quite sure; for he never rises till between one and two."

"By the way," added the Captain, "you have not told me his name."

"I don't know," said Theodore, "that he would thank me for telling you his name; but

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between ourselves his name is Stratton. He carries in his card-case eight or ten cards, and all with different names, and sometimes he has been very nearly brought into difficulties by that humour."

Having ascertained this intelligence, the Captain was ready enough to quit his company.

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CHAPTER IV.

HARTLEY was punctual to his appointment with Theodore Clarke. But for a moment or two, the Captain doubted the accuracy of his direction, for the house to which he had been referred, as the residence of the gentleman who was to introduce him to Frederick Stratton, was of a very humble description indeed. It by no means seemed to comport with the idea which that gentleman entertained of himself. Humble as the house was, Theodore Clarke dwelt in the most exalted part of it; and there was he found, at twelve o'clock at noon, his apartment and himself being in the utmost dishabille.

The room was small and full, though not well-

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furnished. The walls were not papered nor painted, but they were nearly covered with pictures, some in black frames with glasses, and some in frames without glasses, and some only pinned or pasted against the wall, without frames or glasses. Some of these pictures were caricatures, in which the wit exceeded the decency; and others were delineations of heathen goddesses, and such like cattle, so far connected with modesty, as if not to blush themselves, yet to cause a blush in others. There were books also, and these too were not in the best possible order. They were scattered about the room, and covered with dust, and intermingled with miscellaneous minor articles of furniture, and various parts of dress, such as shoes, stockings, handkerchiefs, and night-caps. Three crazy rush-bottomed chairs, and one ricketty table, had no sinecure place, but were loaded with litters that might laugh at catalogues. In one corner of the room stood a chest of drawers that had seen its best days, the drawers that were

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open could not easily be shut, and those that were shut could not easily be opened; and that piece of furniture resembled a stage-coach, which carries more outside than inside passengers. The fire-place was not much of an ornament to the room, and in the condition in which it was when Captain Hartley saw it, it did not appear much more calculated for use than for ornament. A lop-sided unfixed grate, red with rust, buried in ashes, and filled with rubbish, promised but little comfort, and but little warmth.

"You are very punctual, Captain," said Theodore Clarke; "you have taken me rather by surprise, but I shall soon be ready; will you sit down till I have dressed myself?"

It was very easy to say 'sit down,' but it was not quite so easy to find a seat to sit upon. But one of the chairs was soon emptied of its contents, and the Captain sat down in astonishment at the littered and miserable condition of the residence of a person who had

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the day before been as well dressed as a duke, and as fastidious as a dandy.

The duties of the toilet were soon finished, and the Captain was conducted by his friend to the residence of Frederick Stratton.—If, in that abode, there had been symptoms of negligence and want of order, it would not have been wonderful. But there was not any observable lack of the ordinary comforts of a dwelling-house.

The young gentleman made his appearance, and there was in his deportment and address something which most forcibly struck Captain Hartley, and irresistibly prepossessed him in favour of the wanderer. When the ceremony of introduction had been rapidly passed through, Captain Hartley was desirous of giving such a direction to the conversation as might lead to the forming of some opinion as to the practicability of recalling the young man to sober and rational habits, and to those ways of thinking and acting, which the majority of man-

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kind seem to prefer, and to honour with their patronage and countenance. The Captain, however, was not quite competent to this task. He was a very sober, rational man himself, but that very sobriety and rationality rendered him unfit for reasoning and arguing with such a genius as Frederick Stratton. That which appeared to the Captain as an argument in favour of a certain line of conduct, would appear to the other as an argument against it. For while the multitude is moved by the impulse of imitation, such a genius as Frederick Stratton would studiously avoid acting or thinking like any one else. Captain Hartley also considered that he was not likely to have much influence, in the way of persuasion, over the mind of an impetuous and wrong-headed youth, who had shown himself insensible to paternal influence. But, though Hartley was not quite competent to mould the will of a headstrong genius, yet he had some degree of strength in the very consciousness of his weakness.

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When the introduction of the parties had taken place, the Captain found that the account which had been given of Frederick Stratton's disposition to sociability was perfectly correct. It so happened, indeed, that the young gentleman was, that morning, most heartily disposed to volubility.

"Captain Hartley," said he, after the first introduction, "I am most happy to see you; but I have my doubts as to the lawfulness of war. I do not mean that it is contrary to national laws, or acts of Parliament, but I think it is contrary to eternal and abstract right. I have given the subject a great deal of consideration, and the result of my reflection is, that war is a punishment inflicted on mankind for their folly and vanity in separating and dividing themselves into nations and tribes, and for their selfishness in making distinctions of rank and property."

The opportunity afforded by a short pause, induced Captain Hartley to reply; "I think,

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Sir, that you will find that the merest savages, the most inartificial people on earth, are not strangers to the practice of war."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" interrupted the young gentleman: "there are no people thoroughly and primitively inartificial. Those whom you call savages are in some degree infected with the pestilence of civilization. They have chiefs, and that circumstance alone is sufficient to show that they are in an unnatural and artificial state. Now it is my intention very shortly to publish a volume—a very little volume indeed, but one which shall have such an effect upon the public mind, that all the present frame of society shall be instantaneously and for ever dissolved. The human species is capable of great things, and the public mind is sensible of the value of truth; but truth has never yet been presented to it fairly and honestly. I hardly know at present whether I shall publish a sermon, or a play, or a poem; but whatever be the vehicle through which the medicine shall be conveyed,

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the effect of it will be precisely the same. Within six weeks after the publication, you will find that all the common-place vulgar notions about rank and property and patriotism and government will be quite exploded, and mankind will return to its natural vigour and to its primitive loftiness of condition."

In such style as this did Frederick Stratton harangue his friends for nearly an hour; perpetually starting fresh paradoxes and reasoning concerning them, as though they had been the most substantial verities.

To Hartley's mind, there seemed to be abundant manifestation of insanity on the part of Frederick Stratton; though Theodore Clarke had said of him, that he was argumentative and rational in his talk. But Hartley was not a genius, nor had he the slightest apprehension of the humours of genius. He was a man of plain sense, taking the world as he found it, and was well able so to manage his own mind, and to guide his own conduct, as to pass reputably in

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society. When, therefore, he heard this kind of talk from the lips of the young man himself, and compared it with the account given by the father, he thought that there could be no doubt of the disorder of the young man's mind. Remote, however, as the Captain might be from the comprehension of the freaks of a paradoxical genius, he was not quite so commonplace in the construction of his mind as to fancy that he could banish these crotchets by a bare exposition of their absurdity. He also thought it possible that Mr. Stratton the elder might have made more use of paternal authority than of parental influence; or that, if reference had been made to feeling, such reference might not have been made with proper judgment. He considered, that if the young man's reason had not entirely forsaken him, he might yet be susceptible of feeling; and that if his vagaries were inaccessible by reasoning, his heart might not be totally incapable of emotion. To try how far he was approachable by these means, the

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Captain led the conversation again to the subject of war, and in speaking of the army, Frederick Stratton said, "I have a brother in the army."

Captain Hartley, with an intentional abruptness, broke in upon him, saying, "You *had* a brother in the army."

The look and the tone which accompanied this short sentence produced the effect designed. The young man trembled and turned pale, the whole expression of his countenance was changed in a moment, tears started into his eyes, he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed loudly, long, and bitterly. His two visitors looked on in silent sympathy. The agony of real sorrow is a perplexing sight to those who are unused to it; but happily nature dictates that which is the best course to the sufferer, and teaches us to be silent till tears have done their utmost to relieve.

When the burst of tears had a little abated, the young man lifted up his face, and looking

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imploringly at Captain Hartley, said, "You knew my brother, Sir; can you tell me any thing of him? He was kind to me. I did love him."

There was an emphasis on the words *he* and *him*, which led the Captain to infer that the young man's father had not been so judicious and temperate as he ought to have been in the use of his paternal authority. From what Hartley had observed at Nettlethorpe, it appeared to him that, notwithstanding Mr. Stratton's good understanding and gentlemanly manners, there were strong symptoms of a leaning to despotism, and a haughty impetuosity of temper. But these defects were not enough to justify or even to palliate the outrageous conduct of his son.

An opportunity was now offered to Hartley to remind the young man of the duty which he owed to his father, and to direct his attention to that regularity and sobriety of demeanour, which he had so thoughtlessly and wildly for-

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saken. But it is much the same with morals and with theories; opinions are not changed by the force of argument, and moral reformation is not the effect of moral exhortation. It is an inward feeling which acts in both cases.

Hartley, however, thought it his duty to embrace this opportunity of giving the young man a little good advice; and very fortunately it happened that this good advice did not do any harm. For in many cases the prosing and common place of advising rather diverts from than directs to the desired point. Frederick Stratton listened to all that the Captain was pleased to say, but though the arguments were very strong, and the exhortation very impressive, it was not by the influence of these that the youth was led to the resolution of returning home. But Hartley was quite as well pleased as if it had been solely owing to his good advice that the wanderer returned to reason. And so, in order to a full enjoyment of his

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triumph, he proposed, that if it were perfectly agreeable, he would accompany Mr. Frederick on his return to Nettlethorpe. The offer was accepted, and the day of return was fixed.

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CHAPTER V.

WHATEVER might be the natural and constitutional harshness of Mr. Stratton's temper, he was moved and melted most deeply at the unexpected, and almost unhoped for return of his son. The joy manifested and felt on this occasion absorbed all other feelings; even the memory of him that was no more, ceased to afflict the family, and the only emotions felt were those of satisfaction and composed delight. There are in the lives of all, who possess any susceptibility whatever, certain seasons and circumstances in which some long enduring anxieties are relieved, or some long desired object is accomplished, and in the delight of which all

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unpleasant thoughts are forgotten, and by the joy which is then experienced, the mind is reconciled to all that is and to all that has been. Such was the return of Frederick Stratton to his family.

It was very natural that every individual in the family should feel gratitude towards Captain Hartley, in proportion to their delight at the recovery of the wanderer. They took it for granted, and no one thought of contradicting them, that the young man's return was the fruit of the Captain's good advice. Then they thought of him more highly than ever; they had before considered him a very agreeable man, but now they found him to be a person of very superior mind, and in possession of every good and desirable quality of heart and understanding.

It has been already hinted, in the course of this narrative, that the Captain had some intention of changing his profession. The profession which he chose, as requiring the shortest

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preparation, was the clerical. Some have thought that the transition from the military to the clerical profession, is rather too abrupt, and that the habits of the army are greatly opposed to the habits, or to what should be the habits, of the clergy. But the objection is more plausible than just. The military man, though hired to kill, is not essentially and constitutionally blood-thirsty; and though he cannot refuse a challenge, he is not therefore vindictive. He acts according to orders, or in compliance with etiquette. He has a strong sense of duty, and that is a valuable principle in a clergyman. The habit also of acting exactly and unquestioningly according to orders, is likely, if carried into the clerical profession, to prevent all wanderings into the irregularities of fanaticism, or any impertinent questionings of the publicly enjoined faith. And it is probable that the habits of a camp may be as good a preparation for the discharge of parochial duties, as the habits of a college and the practice of shoot-

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ing, coursing, and hunting. At all events, it is better to find out reasons and palliations for things which do and will exist, than to be perpetually wearying one's spirits, by reprobating what we cannot reform. Every man, especially every Englishman, has an undoubted right to find fault with every thing if he so pleases; and if he enjoys a pleasure in grumbling, it is a pity not to let him grumble on; but if grumbling disturbs and discomposes him, then he will be wise to seek for reasons to cease from bewailing unavoidables.

Returning then to the narrative, it is sufficient to state, that Captain Hartley not only entertained the intention of changing his profession, but he did also communicate that intention to Mr. Stratton, mentioning the matter to him, as it were doubtingly, and by way of asking his opinion. With a more than usual cordiality of manner and warmth of expression, Mr. Stratton replied—

"My good friend, I am most happy to hear

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that such is your intention. In my opinion, you are perfectly right—nay, more than right; it is a design which does you infinite credit; and, if I can by any means farther your views, it will give me very great satisfaction."

In addition to this and many such like speeches from Mr. Stratton, there were also expressions, not loud, but deep, of approbation from the ladies of the family. When, therefore, it is considered that Captain Hartley had scarcely an acquaintance in the world, except his worthy relative in Houndsditch, it is no wonder that he should find himself much attached to the family of Mr. Stratton; and when it is also considered that the young ladies were of agreeable manners, and that the Captain was five-and-twenty years of age, and disengaged, it is not to be wondered at that he should insensibly and gradually form an attachment to one of the young ladies. And when mention is made of such attachment, it becomes necessary to say something by way of description of the parties.

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Of Captain Heartley, sufficient has been said already to give a notion of the general cast and complexion of his mind. Of the young ladies little has been said, inasmuch as there has been little occasion for their introduction till now.

The sisters, of whom the eldest was named Jane, and the youngest Laura, might not have been the most excellent and perfect samples of humanity, but they were of that peculiar character and turn of mind, which may, by a friend and admirer, be easily described as perfection, or very near it. To speak first of those points of character which were common to both; they were very graceful in their deportment, mild and gentle in their manners, devotedly but unostentatiously attached to each other, benevolent to their poor neighbours, charitable in their thoughts and opinions of mankind, and, though not pedantic and learned in their discourse, yet by no means given to gossiping, or addicted to small-talk. They were not of extraordinary beauty, yet they had

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that expression which excites more admiration than mere prettiness. The general character of their minds was such that no one who had not some degree of respect for himself would ever think of paying his addresses to either of them. Young gentlemen of vulgar minds professed themselves to be afraid of these young ladies. They were not silent and reserved, affecting an oracular wisdom, nor were they much addicted to lecturing and haranguing. They never, by any hint or insinuation the most distant, ever gave their neighbours reason to accuse them of thinking themselves superior to the rest of the world. This certainly contributed in a great measure to raise them to that high degree of esteem which they enjoyed among their friends.

In the points above mentioned, and in many others, the two sisters agreed. Some few there were in which there was a little diversity. Jane was something more grave than Laura, who had a tendency to humour, but it was kind and playful, not satirical and sarcastic.

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Laura had also more personal beauty than Jane; but as if to make amends for this, she uniformly submitted her judgment to that of her sister, with a more complete and unhesitating deference than the difference of age seemed to demand. The care which they took to preserve domestic harmony, was abundantly repaid by the delightful success which attended it.

To make a deliberate choice between the two sisters might have been a difficult task; Captain Hartley did not attempt it. Accident superseded the necessity of deliberation. It was the custom of the young ladies to pay occasional visits to the cottages of the poor people. This is a very laudable and most valuable custom; but it is not every one who can manage it well. Too often is the condescension regarded by those who display it, as worth much more than it really is; and when generosity is thus pompously displayed, the crafty poor will take unfair advantage of it, and the timid and the

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humble will often pass unrelieved. The ostentatiously generous, and the lovers of picturesque misery, are more especially delighted in lavishing their bounty where external appearances are most deplorable; and thereby they not unfrequently patronize sloth, and encourage negligence and filth. Some visitors of the poor are too fastidious to attend minutely and patiently to the wants of the necessitous, and therefore the work of charity is slurred over, and the indiscriminate gift is received thanklessly as a right, and blesses neither the giver nor the receiver.

It was well for the honest and industrious poor of Nettlethorpe that Jane and Laura Stratton did not negligently discharge the duty of visiting the poor; but so observant and judicious were they in their visits, that instead of encouraging indolence they excited to diligence. And as the conscientious discharge of duty usually brings with it a pleasure that rewards the labour, so did it happen in the present case;

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for the daughters of Mr. Stratton, by their constant and careful attention to their poor neighbours, formed an acquaintance with them, and were much interested in them, and were delighted in listening to their talk, and observing and tracing the developement and varieties of their character.

Finding a pleasure in this occupation, they frequently made the affairs of the villagers a topic of domestic talk; and the two sisters would laugh together at absurdities, or make sentimental remarks on follies, which they might have seen or heard of, and would sincerely express their pity for the sorrows which it was not in their power to heal or alleviate.

As the village of Nettlethorpe was some few miles distant from the nearest market-town, the young ladies would often execute little commissions for the cottagers, and would bring medicines for the sick, for there was no resident apothecary in the village. One evening, after Laura had paid a visit to the market-town, and was in rather higher spirits than usual, her

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sister Jane suddenly interrupted her, by asking whether she had recollected to bring the medicine for poor Mrs. Mason. The laugh paused suddenly at the inquiry, and with much self-reproach for her negligence, the young lady acknowledged that she had forgotten it.

Then there arose a long and confused discussion of the steps which should be taken to rectify the evil; and of course it may be very naturally supposed, that Hartley was prompt in offering his services. He found that it would be absolutely necessary for him to ride over to the town early on the following morning, and as he should not be long detained, he could without the slightest inconvenience bring back the medicine in good time for the poor patient. Laura Stratton, however, insisted that no one should be at the trouble of supplying the defects of her memory, but that she herself would repeat her visit to the town on the following morning.

Now as Captain Hartley had affirmed that

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he was under an absolute necessity of going to the market-town on the same morning, he could not well retract the assertion, and therefore very few words were required to arrange that both should go, and of course in the same conveyance. In all this, considered merely in itself, there was nothing very extraordinary or particular; there was nothing to excite a blush in the young lady, or to impose an awkward silence in the young gentleman. Nevertheless, such effects were produced; for after the arrangement had been made, Laura blushed, and the Captain was confusedly and perplexedly silent. Moreover, the parties were conscious of their awkward feelings and were desirous of concealing them, and the very efforts which they made for that purpose told most effectually against it.

Falling in love is, in all places and at all times, a most serious affair, but there are some places and some times in which it is more serious than in others. It is a terrible thing in the country,

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where people have nothing else to do; and a most terrible thing in the winter time, when the parties cannot ramble in the groves or saunter in gardens or sit in alcoves and gather living flowers and sigh over scattered rose-leaves; but when whole families are congregrated for hours in one room, and when grave parties look gravely at the fire, and gravely at one another; then it is that lovers are grievously restrained, and know not where to direct their eyes, and torture themselves to death to put themselves at ease. In such an unpleasant, undescribable, indefinite manner did the Captain and Laura Stratton pass the remainder of that evening. They were neither conscious nor unconscious, in love nor out of love. They both thought that every body was looking at them, and they took great pains not to look at one another, and then they took pains to look at one another lest they should seem to be taking pains not to look at one another. It was some con-

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siderable time after the arrangement for the next morning's journey had been made, before the parties concerned could so far compose themselves as to speak deliberately and definitely on that or any other subject.

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CHAPTER VI.

FOR one couple that falls into love deliberately, intentionally and expressly, according to the dictates of the judgment, and the conscious determination of the will, there are ten thousand at least that fall in love they know not how, and they know not when. This is generally the case with very young people, and not unfrequently does it also thus happen to such as are not mere children.

The morning which was destined for the excursion of the young people, was remarkably fine for the time of year. And well was it for them that it was so; for that circumstance gave them a topic of discourse to begin with, but for

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which they might have made their journey in total silence.

" I have often observed," said Captain Hartley, " that at this time of year, we have some of the most beautiful and delightful days in the whole course of the seasons. There is something, too, most peculiarly delightful in a fine day in winter."

" From its being unusual, and from the contrast which it forms with the general aspect of the seasons," replied Laura.

" And also from the shortness of the days," added the Captain; " for it appears to be the constitution of our nature, that as humanity itself is fleeting and evanescent, it sympathizes with and delights in that which is also transient, and we have a feeling of affection for that which is fleeting."

" The feeling, perhaps," replied Laura, " may be altogether selfish, if we trace it to its true source."

" That may be said of all our feelings," an-

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swered the Captain; "but they are not the less valuable or the less beautiful on that account. Nor is it very desirable to enter too minutely into an analysis of those emotions which are obviously beautiful. The utmost reach of the exertions of philosophy is to justify common language, and to vindicate and account for that which is."

"But, Sir," rejoined the young lady, who was very unwilling to imagine that she had read metaphysical books in vain; "you do not mean to assert that there is no benefit to be derived from analyzing the emotions of the mind, and inquiring into the constitution of our nature? it appears to me to be one of the noblest studies in which we can be engaged."

"I must confess, myself," said Hartley, "so much of a bigot, that I do not think knowledge, merely as knowledge, to be the great desideratum that it is usually represented."

"And what do you think, Sir, of Bacon's aphorism, 'knowledge is power.'"

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"I think it very true in some cases, and very false in others: in short, it is either a mere truism or an absolute falsehood. Knowledge of the arts and sciences, which contribute to the embellishment and enjoyment of life, is certainly very desirable, as placing many pleasures within our reach, which we might otherwise not have acquired. But mere knowledge is but something to talk about."

"And is it not pleasant," Laura quickly and smilingly replied, "to have something to talk about?"

"Most undoubtedly," answered Hartley; "but is it not far more pleasant to have, as the result of our pursuit after knowledge, something more durable and beneficial to us than merely talk?"

"Yes," answered Laura; "it may be so; but I cannot help thinking yet, that knowledge, as knowledge, is desirable. For instance, is there not in the human mind a natural and innate curiosity to know? and is there not a pleasure

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in the gratification of that curiosity? To the female mind you will acknowledge that there is."

"And I will acknowledge the same of the other sex," replied the Captain; "but I also believe that both have at times repented the indulgence of that propensity."

Laura Stratton at this remark changed colour, and her lips quivered, and her eyes seemed starting tears, and painfully repressing them. Hartley, who was rather shy and timid—for very good soldiers can be timid among friends, though they are bold among enemies,—Hartley had not observed the alteration in Laura's countenance, and attributed her silence merely to the fact that she had nothing to reply to his last observation; he therefore proceeded in the same strain.

"What is a more common topic for works of fiction, appealing to the feelings and seeking to awaken an interest in human bosoms, than an exhibition of the misery arising from curiosity.

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The passion is almost universal, I will grant you; but I do contend, that if the truth were known, it would be found, that where curiosity had in one case been the means of good, it has been in a thousand the cause of misery. But where there is any symptom of mystery or concealment, there is generally a strong desire to remove that veil, even though it may be apprehended at the same time that the removal will be productive of pain. That emotion is finely painted in Moore's poem of the Veiled Prophet."

Hartley felt that he was prosing; it was a failing to which he was subject, and of which he was occasionally conscious; and, however generally agreeable his own voice might be to his own ear, the thought suddenly seized him at this moment that the voice of Laura Stratton might be quite as agreeable to him as his own. He therefore suddenly checked himself, and with a smile said, "But I beg your par-

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don for discussing common places with so much gravity, I need not read you a lecture on the subject."

Laura sighed deeply, and made an effort to reply, but words would not follow the effort: and thereupon Captain Hartley, notwithstanding his general indifference to unnecessary knowledge, and his recently-delivered lecture on the evils of curiosity, felt painfully desirous to know the cause of these melancholy symptoms. He ventured to ask the young lady if she were unwell; and, at the end of another deep-drawn sigh, she said, "No, Sir."

That short answer was uttered in such a tone, and with such a cadence, as intimated, on the part of the speaker, a wish that no farther question might be asked on the subject; and in this sense Hartley understood it. It was a difficulty then to change the topic, and it was not very pleasant to pursue the journey in silence. The Captain was sensible that he had excited painful associations, though

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he knew not of what precise description; when, therefore, he recollected the discourse of the talkative blacksmith, and called to mind the constrained and embarrassed manner of Mr. Stratton, who was, otherwise, a man of address and gentlemanly deportment, he was convinced that there must be something wrong in the family. And all these provoking glimmerings of an unapproachable secret, rendered him still more anxious to penetrate the mystery. He could have resisted one or two temptations, but when they came cumulatively upon him in such rapid succession, and he seemed to be living in a region of mystery, then the desire of solving the difficulties came to be more and more powerful. And as those persons, who are habitually and ordinarily temperate, become more violent and outrageous in their seldom-occurring fits of intemperance, than the habitually intemperate; so are those who are not generally addicted to idle curiosity, more strongly excited, when, by any peculiar

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circumstances, their dormant curiosity is aroused. So felt Captain Hartley; but in the midst of this strongly-excited curiosity he was considerate. He was especially desirous of avoiding every allusion which might cause an unpleasant emotion in the mind of the young lady; but as he could form no conjecture as to the cause of her uneasiness, he knew not how to guard his expressions. He certainly would abstain from alluding to the subject of curiosity; but, as he knew not what that knowledge was, which had so painfully gratified, or which so anxiously tempted her curiosity, it was not possible for him to know when he might be making unpleasant allusions.

His only resource then was, on the supposition that there had been any transgressions in the conduct of Mr. Stratton, to avoid references to moral inaccuracies, and to confine himself, as much as possible, to generalities; and to be, in fact, ten times more common-place than was his usual habit. At the same time,

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while he was cautious of wounding the young lady's feelings, he was the more particularly attentive and kind in his manner towards her, as to an invalid: and in the little conversation which passed, he so displayed a spirit of candour and generosity, that Laura's cheerfulness presently returned, and the journey was finished as pleasantly as it was commenced.

In this brief journey of nine or ten miles, a sympathy of an interesting nature had sprung up between the parties. Laura was grateful to the Captain for his delicate attentions, and Hartley felt a more than usual compassion for the unknown sufferings of Laura; and she easily discovered the nature of that compassion, when among the rest of his conjectures, it had occurred to him that possibly there might be something of an affair of the heart connected with these sufferings.

When they had arrived at the town, which was a sea-port, where their respective commis-

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sions were to be executed, they separated with an understanding that they should meet at the inn where the carriage was put up. Hartley, who had very little to do, found that he had leisure to saunter about for an hour on the beach, and to amuse himself by watching the vessels as they entered the harbour. He had not been many minutes there, when he was accosted very familiarly and loudly, by a person whom he remembered to have seen recently, and whom he presently recognized to be Theodore Clarke. The meeting was very cordial on the part of Mr. Clarke, whatever coolness or reserve there might be on the part of the Captain. Hartley was not a proud man, though his reserve might by some persons be so characterized; but there were those who, by their noisy, blustering, swaggering style, were not agreeable to him. Theodore Clarke was of this description; and though there was no imaginable reason on the score of rank, why there should be

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any difference felt, or any distance kept between the parties, yet Hartley was conscious that he regarded Theodore with this feeling, and he was rather desirous of concealing it. He therefore met and spoke to Mr. Clarke with as great an effort towards sociability as he could possibly make. He was not very successful; but Theodore Clarke overlooked it, and made up for the other's silence and reserve by his own loquacity and communicativeness.

"And so, Captain, you have persuaded Stratton to return home? Now you have nothing more to do than to persuade one of his sisters to leave home. I suppose that will be the end of it. Well, Captain, you are a fortunate man."

"You seem," said Hartley, endeavouring to smooth a gathering frown, "to take very much for granted."

"Ay, ay, to be sure, I don't ask you to confess; you are not supposed to be under the ne-

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cessity of proclaiming to all the world that you have thoughts of changing your condition." Theodore Clarke smiled, and said again; "But to be serious, Captain, I have a great respect for you as a friend, and I would advise you not to be in too great a hurry to commit yourself. You may find yourself disappointed in pecuniary matters. There is something in the family of Nettlethorpe that is is not quite as it should be."

Hartley listened with eager attention, and he was almost thrown into a violent passion when Clarke merely added,

"I am not aware of the real facts, but I have at different times heard Frederick Stratton speak as if his father was not quite so much his own master as a gentleman of independent fortune ought to be. But don't let me say anything to set you against the family. Judging from the young gentleman, they seem to be a very superior family, and to have many excellent qualities."

The Captain was disturbed, and the more so

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because he wished to conceal his emotion; and he was mortified at being treated with so much familiarity by this accidental and chattering acquaintance. As coolly as he could, he therefore replied,

"Well, Mr. Clarke, I thank you for the trouble you have given yourself on my account, and the interest which you are pleased to express for to my welfare; but I trust I can take care of myself. I hope you have not made this journey solely on my account."

With these words Hartley was turning round, and about to depart, leaving his friend to his own meditations; but Mr. Clarke was one of those who are not easily repulsed by a little coolness. Such persons of any respectability as he could by any means claim as acquaintance, he would not readily relinquish; it was not his forte to understand, or at least to take a hint. Instead, therefore, of leaving the Captain according to the hint given him, he very familiarly took hold of his arm, saying,

"If you are going to walk I shall be glad to

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join you. I must acknowledge that my journey here was not solely on your account; though if I could have done you a service, I should not have thought it a trouble."

To such an expression of disinterested generosity, what answer of repulsiveness could be given? Yet it was very clear that the motive was not of the most unmixed nature. Hartley made a very faint acknowledgment of such kindness, and directed his meditations to thoughts how he might best rid himself of the benevolent incumbrance.

Meditation was not one of Mr. Clarke's habits; and while his companion was silent, he continued talking.

"Nettlethorpe is not very far from here, I believe?"

"About nine or ten miles," replied the Captain.

"You came over on horseback, I suppose?"

No answer was given, and the Captain was surprised at the forgiving temper as much as

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before he had been at the disinterested benevolence of his companion. Theodore Clark proceeded. "Nettlethorpe is a pleasant village, I have heard. I have never been there. Perhaps it would appear intruding if I were to call upon you there. Though I don't know; for I was very intimate with Frederick Stratton, and I believe I did as much as any one to bring him to reason. Mr. Stratton, the father, is a proud man, I have been told."

Hartley was still silent, and could not but admire the perseverance of Theodore Clarke, who must see, he imagined, that his companion was not agreeable. But Theodore Clarke did not see it, and did not think of it. He had not the slightest notion that his talk was wearisome, and that Hartley was endeavouring to make him understand that it was. They at length reached the gate of the inn, where the carriage was waiting to convey Laura and the Captain back to Nettlethorpe. Hartley extricated his arm, and with much alacrity and politeness,

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bowed to his friend, wishing him a good morning. But Theodore was not disposed of so easily.

"Are you at this inn? So am I."

This was provoking again; but there was no remedy at hand, and the annoyance could not be avoided. Hartley was fully determined not to introduce his acquaintance to Laura, and he was also desirous to avoid being seen in such company. He therefore placidly suffered Theodore to lead him to his own apartment. Another misfortune, however, now arose, for it was necessary that Laura should know that Hartley was in the house, and was ready to return to Nettlethorpe. And this information could hardly, under present circumstances, be conveyed to the young lady, without being overheard by the troublesome Theodore. While the Captain was meditating his escape from his generously-disposed friend, a sound of carriage wheels was heard rolling rapidly out of the inn-yard. Hartley hastily rose and went to the win-

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dow, from whence, to his great astonishment and perplexity, he saw Mr. Stratton's carriage taking a hasty departure. It was possible he might be deceived. He rang the bell and inquired if Mr. Stratton's carriage was gone; and when the inquiry had been hastily answered, the waiter suddenly left the room, and shortly returned, bringing a note, which he presented to Hartley, saying, "I believe, Sir, this note is for you."

Hartley saw that it was for him, and he opened it with no slight degree of trepidation, wishing again and again that he could extricate himself from Theodore Clark. The note was as follows.

"My dear Hartley.

"Circumstances which cannot be explained at present, render it necessary that you should not return to Nettlethorpe. I know the candour and generosity of your disposition, and am persuaded that you will not put a wrong construction upon this singular step. Shortly, I

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fear, the whole mystery will be explained, if not to your satisfaction, at least to our exoneration. My old acquaintance, Theodore Clarke, is in the town, and he will be the means of transmitting any thing which you have to send to me.

Yours ever,
FREDERICK STRATTON."

When Hartley had read this any-thing-but-satisfactory note, he addressed himself to Theodore with a more than usual earnestness; and handing the note to him, said,

"If you can give me any interpretation of this mysterious note, you will do me a kindness indeed."

"I will give you all the information," replied Mr. Clarke, "that I am in possession of; but I can assure you that there is almost as much mystery in the affair to me as there is to you. I have been here for three or four days on a visit, and this morning, as I was

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walking in the North Street, I saw a gentleman riding furiously on horseback into the town. I recognized Frederick Stratton, and he as readily recognized me. He asked me if I had seen you this morning; and he requested me to endeavour to find you, and, if possible, to detain you, if you should not be at the inn, or to keep you in conversation till after one o'clock. He then added, 'If Captain Hartley has any communication to make to me, desire him to give it to you, and I will shortly send to your lodgings in town an address, by which you may send to me.' And he concluded by saying, 'Now don't ask me any questions; you will probably soon see me in London again, at my old lodgings, but not at my old habits.' He then left me: and I have fulfilled my commission to the best of my ability. You little suspected, when I talked about calling on you at Nettlethorpe, that you should take such a sudden leave of it yourself?"

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"This is all very unaccountable," said Hartley.

"I could have told you as much," answered Theodore; "but I suppose that there are some financial embarrassments, and, as Mr. Stratton is a proud man, and you have seen him as a rich man, he does not wish you should see him as a poor man."

"But there was no necessity for an act of such downright rudeness," replied Hartley; "the language of Frederick Stratton's note certainly indicates that some unexpected calamity has befallen the family."

It was a great happiness to Captain Hartley that he was a man of such extraordinary placidity and quietness of character. Any one else would have blustered and bullied, and have made a most outrageous noise about explanation and satisfaction; but he was very well content to wait for an explanation, and to trust that it would be satisfactory. There was a little more perturbation, however, of spirit,

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with respect to his thoughts of Laura Stratton. He did not so patiently bear that loss, nor was he so content to wait calmly for an explanation on that subject. Whatever difficulty he might formerly have had in deciding which of the young ladies was the most interesting, he had no difficulty now; and forthwith, the name of Laura Stratton was a name of interest and emotion.

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CHAPTER VII.

THEODORE Clarke and Captain Hartley returned to London. The former to pursue his literary avocations, and the latter to addict himself to those studies which might be necessary to fit and prepare him for his meditated change of profession. The narrative, therefore, must lose sight of them, while it pursues the movements of Mr. Stratton's family; going back for that purpose to the moment when the carriage which conveyed Laura and Captain Hartley from Nettlethorpe had quitted the village. At that moment the postman brought Mr. Stratton a letter; a little dirty square scrap of clumsily folded paper, with a direction so villainously

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written, that none but a post-office clerk could read it except Mr. Stratton himself, and to him the letter seemed to be transparent; for before he opened it, he turned pale, and gnashed his teeth; and the servant who brought him the letter was glad to escape from his angry presence. In a very few minutes Mr. Stratton's bell was rung violently, and Frederick was summoned.

The instant that the young man entered the room, his father bolted the door, and in a fever of passion, which was not very unusual to him, said, "Frederick, are they gone?"

The young man, at the moment, was not aware of his father's meaning, nor at all suspicious of any peculiar cause of agitation; he therefore very quietly repeated the word, "Gone?"

Violently striking the table, and raising his voice to a scream, Mr. Stratton replied, "Ay! I ask you if Hartley and Laura are gone. Why don't you speak?"

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With quietness of manner, Frederick replied, "Yes, Sir, they are gone; but if you wish it, I can overtake them and bring them back."

"Hartley must not return," said Mr. Stratton, "but bring back Laura this moment."

"But what apology must I make to Captain Hartley?"

"Apology!" exclaimed Mr. Stratton, with an aspect and tone of bitterness, "any apology you please." Then breathing hard, and groaning with an agony which terrified his son, the afflicted man, in a more subdued tone, continued, "Frederick, if you have any regard for your father's feelings, ask me no farther questions, but make the best of your way after Laura, and bring my child back again: but tell Hartley he must not return. I respect him, but—there—there go—go."

Frederick Stratton obeyed, and the result of that obedience was stated in the preceding chapter. Mr. Stratton the elder had always been subject to occasional fits of violence, and to transient emotions of caprice. Laura, therefore, when

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her brother brought the message, that she was to return alone, and that Hartley was not to be permitted to return to Nettlethorpe, immediately suspected that the cause of this hasty movement and rude resolve was to be traced to her father's apprehension of an incipient attachment between them. Now this suspicion was by no means adapted to weaken or destroy whatever little sentiment of love had begun to take possession of her bosom. She yielded, however, an unhesitating obedience to her father's will, and carried her self-denial so far as not to persist in her proposal of seeing Captain Hartley to take leave of him. And one reason why she was thus placidly obedient was, that she was aware that there would be some difficulty in managing the parting, so as to satisfy at once her judgment and her feelings.

Great, however, was her surprise, and bitter were her feelings, when, on returning home with her brother, she did not merely meet the frowns or hear the reproaches of an arbitrary

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and capricious parent, but heard from the servants that her father had left his home, and was gone no one knew whither. She next inquired for her mother, and was informed that the calamity, whatever it was, which had so deeply distressed, and so violently disturbed Mr. Stratton, had not so powerfully affected her other parent; but that Mrs. Stratton, who was in her own apartment with her eldest daughter, was desirous of not having at present any other company. Poor Laura was therefore left to all the horrors of filial solicitude, and excited curiosity: a curiosity not indeed of idle impertinence, but of strong personal interest. She had before frequently seen and heard that which led her to conclude that some painful and mortifying discovery was anticipated by her father; and she knew that her mother was in the secret, and more than half suspected that her sister knew it too.

This, however, was a state of suspense in

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which she could not long patiently remain. And as soon as she could have her brother's company, she commenced questioning him very particularly, as to his knowledge of the mystery.

"Child," said the young man, with much of his father's impatience of manner, "I have already told you every thing I know. I hate secrets, and I hate equivocation. What my father can mean by keeping us in this state of anxiety, I cannot conjecture. I feel that our family is a mark for the whole neighbourhood to point at with the finger of suspicion or of scorn. We have no society and no relatives; we are alone in the world."

"Well, my dear brother," answered Laura, "it does not become us to speak or think harshly of our father; he has certainly been a kind parent to us; and I am sure that, whenever he may have spoken hastily or sharply, it has not been from any feeling of ill-humour, but

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merely owing to the irritability arising from some troubles with which he does not wish to afflict us."

"But I do not approve," replied Frederick, "of all this mystery. People make free with our character; and if I were to tell you what I have heard, you, with your common-place notions of society and propriety, would be shocked into an agony."

"Frederick!" exclaimed Laura, "what are you saying? Have not you this moment told me that you hate secrets? and now you are tantalizing me with insinuations that you know more than you dare to tell me."

"Nay, my good sister, I am not concealing from you anything that I know; I have merely abstained from annoying you by the repetition of idle and perhaps false reports."

"Even these, however," answered Laura, "it may be better for me to hear at once, than to be in a state of suspense and anxiety, thinking them perhaps worse than they are."

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"Can you bear, then," said her brother, "to be told that suspicions are uttered, and that rumours are afloat, which say that your mother bears a name to which she has no legal title?"

Laura shook her head mournfully, and replied,—"I know that it is a reproach to which our mother has been subjected; but whatever might have been the case in her younger days, the reproach has not now any foundation."

"I hope it has not," answered the young man; "but I am very much at a loss to know why the story should be revived now; and I think it can be no trifling annoyance that has driven my father from his home in this strange manner."

"Oh, Frederick, Frederick!" cried Laura; "you ought to do all in your power to comfort me, but your harsh suspicions make the matter worse. I know not what to think."

"Nor do I," answered the brother: "but I feel more and more convinced that the institutions of society are most injurious and destructive. Man, in a state of civilization, becomes a

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self-tormentor. He makes ridiculous laws and idle institutions, and fetters himself, and bows down his soul to a mean and base subjection to phantoms of his own creation."

Laura seized her brother's hand with pathetic earnestness, and, with a tone of supplication, said, "Brother, let me implore you by all that is good, not to give way to such pernicious notions. Have you no regard to my feelings? Have you no compassion for your afflicted father and mother?"

"Yes; I have that compassion for them, that I would willingly assist in extricating them from ignoble servitude, and a base subjection to narrow and contracted principles."

"This is not a time," said Laura, "to enter into discussions of this nature; it will be far more to the purpose if you will seek after your father, and endeavour to render him some assistance, or afford him some consolation."

"But where shall I find him?"

Scarcely were these words uttered, when a

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servant from Nettlethorpe rectory came to request that Mr. Frederick Stratton would, as soon as he conveniently could, favour the clergyman with his presence. This reverend gentleman was in many points one of the most useful and valuable men that could possibly fill the situation of parish priest; and the narrative will not be needlessly suspended by a delineation of his character. It is not usually and popularly considered complimentary to describe a character by negatives; but there were some features in the moral aspect of Mr. Brownlow which had what may be called a high negative value; the expression has a paradoxical sound, but it is not unintelligible. He was a man who made no noise, bustle, or parade; he made no talk about the dignity of his office, nor did he use himself to grave and pompous declamation against vice, and in favour of virtue; yet he was honestly and carefully attentive to his duties, and had a nice and delicate apprehension of moral propriety. He was highly liberal to his parish-

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ioners, but he did not advertise eleemosynary coals by the bushel, nor immortalize a periodical bonus of blankets. He did not belong to that party in the Church commonly called evangelical, nor did he make long sermons or use hard language against sectarians; yet there were no sectarians in his parish: and when, occasionally, a visit of proselytism was made to Nettlethorpe, by any neighbouring sectarian, this most tolerant pastor gave no interruption; so that almost for very lack of opposition, sectarianism gained no ground. In his liberality he was unformal, and in his personal attention to his parishioners he was without partiality. He did not expect to find every individual perfectly and exquisitely correct; and therefore, when he had occasion, as of course he sometimes had, to rebuke a transgressor, the rebuke was given in a spirit of so much kindness and consideration, that the transgressor, instead of feeling angry with his reprover, felt ashamed of himself. All the

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people of the village liked him: and though he might not in all matters of a ceremonial nature have been quite so accurate as some very ceremonious and ceremonial bishops might desire; yet he did by his plain good sense and honestly conscientious moral feeling, infinitely more good in his parish, than many a dry, formal, starched, prim regarder of every possible vagary of ecclesiastical discipline. Furthermore, and still negatively to speak, he was not a man of profound learning. He had a library, and in his youth he had read some books, and he still continued to read some periodicals: he had not taken a very high honour at the University, nor had he ever obtained any prize for any composition, Greek, Latin or English, poetry or prose; yet he had an excellent understanding and a very clear head; and he was quite as useful to his parish as if he had studied the Greek language till he had forgotten the English. He did not know much about Greek particles, but he knew the poor

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of the parish and they knew him. His political character was also negative ; he did not profess himself in opposition to the administrators of the constitution by which and in which he lived, nor did he lend himself to the noisy brawlings of elections; and when there was a contested election in his county, he voted as he pleased, and being pleased to have his own way in the disposal of his vote, he suffered others to do the same, asking no questions and using no influence. He was not very highly esteemed by people of strong party propensities; but when there existed not any peculiar cause of political agitation, he was in general estimation and respect. To his other agreeable qualities he added the pleasant, quiet manners which are said to belong to a gentleman, but which belong generally to men of good understanding and well-regulated passions.

A man like this was clearly a valuable friend to rich or poor; and Mr. Stratton had, soon after his first taking up his abode at Nettlethorpe,

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discovered the excellent qualities of Mr. Brownlow's mind, and to him he had confided what could not be totally concealed; but, like most confessors, Mr. Stratton had confessed but partially. Even in his humiliation man is proud. The confession which had been made, was, that peculiar circumstances had prevented the solemnization of marriage, according to the rites of the Church established by law, between those two persons who bore the name of Mr. and Mrs. Stratton, and who, to the world, had appeared as man and wife for five-and-twenty years. The peculiar circumstances, however, had not been stated. Every possible and imaginable excuse was made for the public ear, to account for the well-known fact, that Mrs. Brownlow and Mrs. Stratton did not visit; and it so happened, that amidst a multitude of plausible lies, the truth was not visible. But the peculiar circumstances were now to be developed.

When Frederick Stratton appeared at the

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rectory, Mr. Brownlow took him by the hand, and, in his usual quiet manner, said, "I have sent for you, Mr. Stratton, to speak to you on a very unpleasant topic."

Frederick felt alarmed at this preface, not because of any peculiar agitation in the speaker, but rather because his deliberate manner implied preparation for the meeting, and seemed threatening, on account of its calmness. The worst suspicions rushed tumultuously into the young man's mind, and he passionately exclaimed, "You are alluding to my father, Sir. Pray tell me where is—"

Mr. Brownlow interrupted him, saying, "Your father is in this house, alive and well; but he has this morning received a letter which occasions him great perplexity. You are not aware, perhaps, of the full extent of the peculiar situation in which Mr. Stratton is placed."

"Of the subject of the letter to which you

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allude, I am not at all aware; but I do know that there are reports and rumours afloat, which, to some minds, might be unpleasant; and so far are these rumours unpleasant to me, that are exceedingly annoying to my sisters."

"You are not, then, I presume," continued Mr. Brownlow, "fully acquainted with the particulars to which I refer?"

"You speak mysteriously, Sir. Will you be kind enough to be more explicit?"

Mr. Brownlow felt somewhat embarrassed, and replied, "It is not very easy, Mr. Stratton, to speak very plainly and abruptly on a matter of this kind. One requires a little preface and preparation."

"Very likely," answered Frederick Stratton: "some little prefacing and introduction may be necessary with some kind of people; but, Mr. Brownlow, I am above those little, foolish weaknesses, and have not that reverence for what are

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called the institutions of society, that some men have. You are speaking of the legal relation which my father bears to my mother?"

"And does it not, Sir, appear to you, that if there were no legal relation, that would be painful for you to hear?"

"Not in the least, not in the least. But this cannot be all; this is scarcely a new discovery, and will not account for my father's bitterness of spirit, and for his strange disappearance from home."

"I am sorry to say that this is not all."

"Then tell me the whole at once," interrupted the young man.

"Do you know, or did you ever hear your father speak of a man named Shepherd?" asked Mr. Brownlow.

"Shepherd? Shepherd?—yes, I have heard the name; but I have no distinct recollection of any thing peculiar connected with that name. But speak out, Sir, speak out; who is this Shep-

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herd? What is he? and what has he to do in the affair?"

"You must be patient; you shall hear the whole truth in good time. I did not know but that you might have had some suspicions, or have received some intimation of the matter from some quarter or other."

"Mr. Brownlow," replied Frederick, in a tone of impatience, "I will be explicit with you, and I beg you will be so with me. I do know that my father and mother lived together before they were married, and I do know that there is a rumour afloat, that they are not married now. To me, all this is a matter of indifference. Now tell me plainly what it is that has occasioned the present agitation in my father's feelings."

"As you are so very earnest in your wish to hear the whole, I will tell you, then, explicitly; for your father has given me commission to inform you of it. It is true, that your father and mother are not married."

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Mr. Brownlow made a short pause, which the young man filled up, by saying, in a tone of great indifference, "Well, Sir!"

The rector then proceeded. "Not only are they not married to each other, but there is an insuperable obstacle which prevents their marrying."

With equal indifference, Frederick Stratton then said, "Proceed, Sir. What is the nature of that obstacle?"

"That obstacle," said Mr. Brownlow, with great seriousness of manner, "is, that the lady called Mrs. Stratton is married to another."

The worthy rector, when he had said this, looked at Frederick Stratton in expectation that so mortifying a disclosure would throw him into a fever and frenzy of passion, or stupify him into a petrifaction of astonishment. It did not, however, produce this effect, or very greatly seem to disturb him. There was an emotion, but it was exceedingly transient; for the young

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man, with a successful, though painful effort, subdued it, and replied,

"You astonish me, Mr. Brownlow, I must acknowledge. It is very strange that I should never have heard of this."

"From whom do you imagine you should have heard of it? Not from Mr. Stratton himself and scarcely any one else would dare to mention the fact to you."

"And may I ask, Sir, how long it is since you first came into possession of this secret?"

"The rumour I had heard many years ago, but it was only this morning that I heard the fact from Mr. Stratton's own lips."

"And for what purpose did my father make that acknowledgment to you, only so very recently."

"Because a very serious difficulty had risen from the circumstance, in which your father was pleased to say he much wished to have my advice. You know that Mr. Stratton received

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a letter this morning. That letter was from Shepherd, to whom I alluded just now."

"Ah!" replied Frederick; "I understand you; he has been making a claim to extort money from my father. Yes, yes, I see now how matters have stood. This explains what hitherto has been so very unaccountable. Well, Sir, and how do you advise my father to act. I suppose he must comply with the demand; for he seems to be in the man's power. Now, Mr. Brownlow, let me tell you, that you may say what you please about social order, and the well being of society, and so forth; I do say and will contend, that one half, ay, nine-tenths of the evils which men suffer arise from their foolishly fixing themselves down by laws and regulations, and such like childish trumpery. What misery now has my father suffered from these absurd principles."

"Rather say, my young friend, what misery is he suffering from having despised these laws and ordinances of society. If he had not, in

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the first instance, made light of them, he might have lived in the enjoyment of that society and those pleasures from which he has now debarred himself."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Brownlow," answered Frederick; "these are your notions, I am well aware: you are naturally and professionally under the influence of prejudices, and you cannot appreciate the principles and spirit of independence."

Mr. Brownlow smiled, but not cheerfully nor contemptuously, and replied, "We cannot now discuss this question, but we must attend to business. This letter, which your father has this morning received from Shepherd, is not merely an importunate or threatening letter to extort money, but it is in reference to an estate devolving most unexpectedly to your mother, which estate he now desires to claim by her means, and for this purpose insists upon her putting in her claims in her proper name."

Frederick Stratton at this announcement

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almost shuddered, for he felt much more mortification than he was willing to acknowledge. He had formed strange notions, and had taken up wild opinions; but when he was called upon to make proof of these notions, he found that they were not quite so powerful and unquestionable as he had imagined. There is a wide difference between the plausibilities of a young man's debating society, and the actual condition of the living world. But there are those who are martyrs to their own crotchets, and such an one Frederick Stratton was disposed to become.

Not only, however, were unpleasant facts against him at this moment, but he was conversing with a man who had not the slightest sympathy with extravagance of any description. The young man was more shaken than he was aware of. After a considerable struggle he replied to Mr. Brownlow—

"This is certainly a very perplexing affair. If, indeed, I were alone, I should have no

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difficulty; but I feel for the unpleasant situation of my sisters. Women cannot be so independent of the world as men may; or at least, they will not, which amounts very nearly to the same thing."

"Of course, in the present matter, we must have regard to the world as it is," replied Mr. Brownlow; "and our business is to consult by what means we may meet the difficulty. This man Shepherd has already employed a legal adviser, and this legal adviser, of course, will not leave any stone unturned to benefit his client."

"I hate lawyers," interrupted Frederick Stratton.

"Very likely," said Mr. Brownlow; "but that will not do any thing to relieve your father from his present perplexity. He has some notion of going abroad for the present, and of suffering the property to be claimed by your mother and made over to Shepherd quietly, provided the man will consent to that arrangement."

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Frederick Stratton again paused, and said, "Will my father see me?"

"I have no doubt that he will, now that you are in possession of the secret which has troubled him so long."

Here the conversation between the parties broke off, and the young gentleman was left to his thoughts, while Mr. Brownlow went to communicate to Mr. Stratton his son's wish to see him.

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CHAPTER VIII.

MR. STRATTON was mortified, but not humbled; he felt that he was in a degraded state; but he was rather angry than contrite. He had been in early life a spoiled child; he was an only one, and his father had been proud of him; but the father was too selfish in his fondness; he wished to make his son a greater man than he had been himself, and, for this purpose, had taken pains to prevent the young man from hastily and inconsiderately placing his affections on any one in humble life, or even in his own rank. The young man was clever, talented, and of good address, and the father thought that there were good hopes

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that his son might aggrandize himself by an advantageous match. The young man was impetuous, passionate, and self-willed; impatient of control, and more disposed to resist his father's authority, than to show any obedient sense of gratitude for his indulgences. His father was not sufficiently politic in the management of the young man, but rather led him to transgress by an over-anxiety. In spite, or perhaps almost in consequence of his father's cautions, he fixed his affections on a young woman in humble life. To marry was, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, utterly impossible, and, to live without her, was, to his mind, quite as impossible. An arrangement was made, and the secret was kept from the father as long as such secrets usually are kept; but at length a discovery was made, and his father was very angry, but not quite so angry as he would have been had the young man been legally married to the young woman. The father insisted that the

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connexion should be broken off, the son insisted that it should not; but the father prevailed, and a premium was given to a man named Shepherd to marry the young woman so repudiated. On the very day preceding that appointed for the marriage, Mr. Stratton's father died. The young man, whose love for the young woman had not been by any means diminished by opposition, immediately sought out the man Shepherd; but he was not at his own home that evening; and it was not till the following morning after the marriage-service had been performed, that Mr. Stratton could see the parties; but he even then made a bargain with the husband, who relinquished his bride as willingly as he had taken her, and for the same reason, because he was paid for it. The negotiation was so dexterously and privately done, that it was scarcely talked about, and less believed, even in the very neighbourhood in which it took place. Some persons thought, and most candid

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people said, that Shepherd was to have been married to the young woman, but that Mr. Stratton had hastily procured a license, and a substitution of persons was made before the service commenced. Shepherd, however, made a good bargain, went abroad, and had an anuity punctually remitted to him. Mr. Stratton sold his estate in that neighbourhood, retired for a while to London, formed new acquaintances, and, by their introduction, purchased an estate at Nettlethorpe, where he lived in a secluded mode for many years. He avoided society, and indeed there was not much to avoid; but the people had, by some means or other, gained some intelligence of some irregularity in his early life, and they thought, from his habits of seclusion, that he himself was conscious that all was not right. They, as is very common in such cases, made the worst of the matter, though certainly it was bad enough as it was. The children of Mr. Stratton by degrees came to the know-

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ledge that all was not right, but the utmost of their knowledge was, that Mr. Stratton had not been married so early as he ought to have been.

The consciousness that he was living in a state which is very properly reprobated in civil society, gave to his mind a feeling of perpetual irritation, and the consciousness of her truly and painfully dependent situation, rendered Mrs. Stratton, for so we must call her, placid, and acquiescent, and obedient. As time moved on, their difficulties did not diminish; for there was necessity for introducing their children in society, and there was a fear lest this introduction might lead to detection. Shepherd never troubled them, nor did he seem disposed to do so, till there unfortunately appeared in one or two of the English newspapers which he was in the habit of seeing on the Continent, an advertisement addressed to the next of kin to ——. Shepherd knew immediately to what it related; and as by the premium which he

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had received, first for taking, then for relinquishing the lady, he had lived much better, and in much greater ease, than otherwise he could ever have expected, his tastes and appetites had been rather excited than gratified, and he thought it very desirable to have more ample means of gratification. For this purpose he made a journey to England; and in London he called upon Mr. Stratton's solicitor, and through him, found out Mr. Stratton's residence. Thither he directed a letter, claiming his wife and the property which devolved to her as next of kin to ——.

This was the occasion of that distressing agitation which was mentioned in the last chapter. And then it became absolutely necessary that Frederick Stratton should know the situation in which his father stood. This mortified and irritated the poor man almost beyond endurance. Now there would be a complete exposure of the whole transaction to the world: and all that which Mr. Stratton had

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hitherto concealed, as he thought, with such success, would be laid open to public gaze and general execration.

When Frederick Stratton saw his father, he was astonished beyond expression at his altered aspect. That spirit which would not bend, was broken. His eyes were fixed upon the ground, his arms were folded across his bosom, his lips were compressed, his colour gone, and his breathing loud, short and difficult. Without raising his eyes, and as if fearful of meeting the looks of his own child, he said—

"Frederick, I suppose Mr. Brownlow has told you every thing?"

"He has, Sir," replied the young man.

"And how am I to meet this difficulty? Must I suffer myself to be advertised to the world—?"

"Sir," interrupted the young man, "you pay too much deference to the world."

"The evil rather is, child, that I have paid too little deference to it: for, had I not been

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reckless of it in my youth, I should not now have been reduced to this miserable dilemma.

Frederick with youthful logic and alacrity replied, "Nay, Sir, rather say, that if you could now treat the world's opinion with as much indifference as you did twenty years ago, you would have nothing to lament. I have heard the whole story from Mr. Brownlow, and I see nothing which need disturb you. It is altogether a matter of opinion, and the whole evil lies in the imagination. The world has no business with your affairs: and you need not heed the talk which you will not hear. Let this man have what he claims, it is no loss to you. It is, I suppose, his legal right; so much for the folly and absurdity of law. I am disgusted with the follies of what is called the social principle. Depend upon it, Sir, the world is in an error. It will be to your honour to show yourself above it."

"Boy," replied Mr. Stratton, "you talk wildly and foolishly. I must not be trifled with."

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"I speak, Sir, according to my best and firmest conviction. I am confident that I am right, and I hope that the day is not far distant when I shall bring all sensible and reflecting people to think with me."

Mr. Stratton sighed bitterly, and took his son's hand, and in a soothing tone said: "I almost fear, my dear boy, that I have myself to blame, that you have adopted these notions. But let me tell you as a friend, that your opinions in the course of a very few years must and will change, and that if you act upon them now in any matter which will not bear or admit of change at your will, you will bitterly repent your folly. I speak to you in pure friendship. You may remember my word some day or other when I shall be in the grave, and I only hope that you will not remember them with any feeling of self reproach. Be careful; you are in great danger."

The young man did not think himself in any danger, and instead of suspecting the soundness

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of his notions, only wondered at the obstinacy with which people at a certain time of life adhere to their prejudices. But, however well satisfied he might be with his own logic, and however confident in the accuracy of his theory, he had sufficient consideration for his father's feelings not to urge the discussion any farther. He directed his inquiries then to the matter in question.

"Well, Sir," said the young man, "I will not enter into the argument; but will you say in what I can be of service to you in the present posture of affairs? As a matter of general benevolence I am willing to be useful. Can I see the man and talk to him? perhaps I may bring him to listen to reason."

Mr. Stratton had not so high an opinion of his son's reasoning powers as the young gentleman himself had; nor did he think it very certain that he who should listen to Mr. Frederick Stratton, would of necessity listen to reason. The very prospect of delay, however,

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and the hope of gaining a little time for reflection and contrivance induced the father to say: "I thank you, my boy, I thank you. Perhaps, if you have no objection to see the man and converse with him upon the subjects, you may bring him to some arrangement by which we may avoid a painful publicity. But still I cannot see what motive the man can have for abstaining from urging his claims."

"Let me see him," replied Frederick, "and I will do my best to extricate you from your perplexity. It will be better for me to see him than for you. I will also see his legal adviser, and will endeavour to get the matter settled. I suppose the property in question is but a trifle."

Mr. Stratton again groaned, and said, "No, no, that is the evil. If it were merely a trifle I might make up the loss, but my whole estate would not much more than purchase it."

"Indeed!" answered Frederick, "and what can a man like that want with so large a property? it will be rather an incumbrance to him.

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It cannot increase the sum of his actual enjoyment. Let me see him, let me see him; and make yourself quite easy; I have no doubt that every thing will be settled very quietly and calmly. What is his address?"

Mr. Stratton, with a smile of incredulity, handed Shepherd's letter to his son: the following is a copy:

"Sir,

"i see by the papers that thear is a larg esteat what coms to my wife as air at law and i donnow whi i shudnt hav mi rites i cum to lonlun all the waie from parriss to mak enquiris about the propetty and i hav sene a lawer what tells me i av evvery bit as gud a rites to that esteat as the King as to his crone god bles him so sir pleas to tell missus as ou all about it i lodges at Missis Wites tobackernist nere wite chaple.

"Your most obedyent servant tom shepperd."

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Much as Frederick Stratton professed to despise the forms and modes of civilized life, and levelling as were his general notions and ordinary language, he could not but feel a kind of aristocratical contempt for the vulgar mind and clumsy hand which penned the above epistle. He thought his feeling was that of superiority of intellect, and he felt convinced that his own powerful mind was more than a match for the weak and low simplicity of Tom Shepherd. But an ignorant crafty rustic in the hands, and under the direction of a practised metropolitan attorney, or legal adviser, which is the most courteous phrase of the two, is often too much for even a philosopher to manage. All this the elder Stratton well knew; but he was willing to have recourse to anything rather than to expose himself to an immediate, mortifying, and degrading publicity. He therefore accepted the young man's offer, adding, at the same time, "If you can persuade him to keep the matter

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as private as possible, tell him that every facility shall be afforded him; and, above all things, try and keep the matter out of the newspapers."

There was a pause for a few moments, at the end of which, Mr. Stratton took hold of his son's hands, and with intense earnestness, said; "Now, my dear boy, let me advise you, and let my example have weight with you. At your age, I was as indifferent as you are to the opinions and habits of society; I thought them altogether arbitrary and ridiculous. And perhaps they may be so; but however absurd they may be, no man can oppose them without sooner or later suffering for it. I cannot, no I cannot tell you what a bitterness of spirit is mine at this moment. Little did I anticipate five-and-twenty years ago, the pain of mind which I now so deeply feel. You may yet avoid such evils. Your destiny is not fixed, and you are little aware how much is in your power. I can only say that there is no pleasure which

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the world can give, that can, by any means, compensate for the pains of remorse."

Father and son parted. The former returned to his melancholy home, and the latter departed for London.

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CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Frederick Stratton arrived in town, he made his first visit to the shop of Mrs. White the tobacconist. He had some difficulty in finding it, and it is very probable that he would not have found it at all, had it not been a matter of great interest that he should find it.

Frederick was a young man of good address, and pleasing manners, but he was very near offending Mrs. White by his great lack of courtesy in inquiring for Mr. Shepherd. For, instead of asking if Mr. Shepherd was at home, he was rude enough to say, "Does a man named Shepherd lodge here?"

Mrs. White properly and indirectly reproved

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him by answering with as much dignity as she could well assume, "There is a gentleman, Sir, named Shepherd who has our first floor. I believe he is at home."

Mrs. White then, in a voice in which strength predominated over beauty, called out, "Is Mr. Shepherd at home?" And when an answer in the affirmative was received, Mrs. White directed the young gentleman to the stairs, which led to her first floor, and on these stairs was standing a female domestic who begged to be informed what name was to be announced as Mr. Shepherd's visitor. Frederick smiled at the formality, and felt himself confirmed in his theory of the utter absurdity and worthlessness of all the forms of society.

When he was at last introduced to Mr. Shepherd, he saw a person whose look was by no means prepossessing or threatening. Mr. Shepherd was apparently about fifty years old, of middle stature, round shouldered, having a small flat head covered with short, thick, straight,

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shining black hair, his eyes were small and black, but rather dull. His dress, though he had lived long at Paris, was not Parisian, but was manifestly recently purchased in London, and consisted of a long blue coat, with broad gilt buttons, a black and yellow plush waistcoat, little leather breeches with long strings at the knees, and speckled worsted stockings peeping above a pair of clumsy black gaiters.

As the name of Stratton was pronounced, Mr. Shepherd made an effort to put on his best manners, and endeavoured to unite courtesy of demeanour with a manifestation of conscious independence. But that sort of thing is more easily said than done. Moreover, Frederick Stratton, who was an unceremonious man at best, felt very little disposed to be more than usually courteous to Mr. Shepherd. The meeting therefore was clumsy, and Mr. Shepherd was quite out in his calculations of his own powers of address. He endeavoured to shake hands with Frederick, but the young man did

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not or would not see the movement. He also was preparing to request the young gentleman to be seated; but the young gentleman was beforehand with him, and had reached himself a chair, on which he immediately sat down and then requested Mr. Shepherd to be seated. This was all contrary to Mr. Shepherd's notions of propriety; but while he was somewhat mortified by this abruptness, he was put somewhat more at his ease by it.

Frederick commenced the negociation by saying, "I understand your name is Shepherd. Now my father has received a letter from you in which you say that you have a claim upon certain property to which it is supposed that my mother is heir."

Shepherd stammered out with a kind of suppressed and half-concealed grin: "Why, Sir, I 'spose you know how that your mother as is, is my wife in matter o' law like; and I have a right in law you know to all such property as revolves to her."

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Frederick frowned and fixed his eyes upon the man so as to puzzle him and put him a little out in his oration; he therefore directed his look to the ground, and went muttering on.

"To be sure, and so I have a right, and my friends all advised me to put in my claim; though to be sure, Sir, I don't wish to do the thing that 's onhandsome to Muster Stratton; he was allus wery kind to me and so wur his father, no one need wish for a better master than old Muster Stratton was, but right's right all the world over, as the saying is."

Frederick did not in the commencement of the negociation put on the air of a suppliant, nor did he feel induced by the manners of Mr. Shepherd to humble himself down to the attitude of one asking a favour. To the above luminous statement the young gentleman replied: "Then I am to understand that you intend to claim your wife as a matter of legal right."

"Why no, Sir," replied the man, "I don't

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wish to take any unfair advantage; only, you know, when there is a good estate to be had for asking for it, I don't see why I should not have it as well as let it be thrown away."

"But have not you already quite as much as you can spend and enjoy? What can you want with more? A large estate can be of no use to you, it will only give you a great deal of trouble."

No two beings differ more widely from each other than a man between fifty and sixty, who is not a genius, and a man of two-and-twenty, who is a genius. They are reciprocally unintelligible. So felt Mr. Shepherd on the present occasion. He had very serious doubts of the sanity of Frederick Stratton. The poor man felt it quite impossible to make any thing of a reply to such an observation, so he did not make the attempt; he merely thought Mr. Stratton one of the oddest men he had ever seen. Frederick therefore continued: "Now really it does appear to me that you can have

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no possible use for this property; and if you persist in the claim, you will only disturb the peace of our family without doing yourself the least good in the world."

"If I don't have it then, who will? Muster Stratton has no rights to it. My lawyer told me I ought to persecute my claim. But I don't want to take it all away from Missus. She may have a share on it and welcome. I only want nothing more than what's right and just.

"My father," replied Frederick, "has no wish whatever to claim the property: he is desirous of avoiding any reference to the fact of your marriage to my mother, which must be made public if you persist in your claim. He does not desire the property for himself; he would let it pass to the next heir."

Hereat Mr. Shepherd almost laughed, and said, "Well, that is a good one!"

Before he had time to descant more largely on the subject of Mr. Stratton's unaccountable

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indifference to wealth, the arrival of the legal adviser was announced.

"Now," exclaimed Mr. Shepherd, "here is my lawyer, and he will tell you all about it."

Whereupon a neat, dapper, spruce, smart, lively looking man entered the apartment, and bowed much more politely to Mr. Shepherd than is usual for such well-dressed men to bow to such ill-dressed men. The lawyer also bowed to Frederick Stratton, but to him he bowed doubtfully and hesitatingly, as not knowing whether he were friend or foe. Mr. Shepherd, however, soon relieved his doubts, by saying to him, "This here gentleman, Sir, is the son of that lady what is the heir to the estate, and he is come to ask me to give up my claim to the property."

The lawyer, with a pert, coxcomical air, and a laugh of self-satisfaction, turned round to Frederick Stratton and said, "And do you find, Sir, that my client is moved by your arguments to give up the property in question? If he does,

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I shall set him down for the most extraordinary client I ever had."

Frederick gave the lawyer one of those looks which are not insolent and to be resented, but which are nevertheless very mortifying to little bustling coxcombs; and if that sort of look could be translated into words, it would be equivalent to saying, "I have not quite so high an opinion of you as you have of yourself."

"And where, Sir," said Frederick Stratton to the lawyer, "would be the wonder if a man who had been raised from a state of dependence and daily labour to comparative opulence by our family, should, from a feeling of gratitude, abstain from robbing that family of its peace and comfort by prosecuting a claim to a property which cannot add to his enjoyment?"

"For that matter," said the legal adviser, "I must take the liberty to differ from you, Sir. It is my humble opinion that increase of property does add to enjoyment. I have found it so in my humble way."

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"All enjoyment is in the mind," said Frederick.

"Is it?" said the lawyer, who, without making any farther comment, took from his pocket a bundle of papers, and began to untie the red tape that bound them.

"Now, Mr. Shepherd," said the legal adviser, "I have procured the certificate of your marriage to Jane Miller; and it appears that this Jane Miller was the only child of Ephraim Miller, son of Peter Miller, by his second wife Rebecca Miller, formerly Rebecca Thompson, spinster."

This kind of discussion or exposition of affinities was by no means pleasant to Frederick Stratton as a matter of taste, and far less so as a matter of feeling. He also felt very much inclined to manifest his sense of the lawyer's rudeness in beginning this discourse, and paying such marked deference to Mr. Shepherd. But he repressed his indignation as well as he could, and merely said,

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"Well, Sir, taking all this for granted, can you not suggest any mode by which the business may be done without making a public exposure of what is and must be so exceedingly painful and distressing to my father? In fact, I think that this man is bound in honour not to prosecute his claim, if the prosecution of it makes public that which he has been paid to conceal."

The lawyer looked cunning and pert again, and with one of his most conceited airs, replied, "My dear Sir, you don't seem to understand law: excuse my freedom, but you don't, indeed. No man can be legally bound to an illegal act. Law is law."

"So I believe," said Frederick, rather angrily, "and that is the only definition that can be given of it. And honour is honour."

"Very likely," said the legal adviser; "but we must attend to business. Now, here is an estate of twelve hundred a-year devolving to the lawful wife of my friend Mr. Shepherd;

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and it appears that a Mr. Stratton, for certain reasons best known to himself, wishes the claim to this estate on the part of Mr. Shepherd's wife to be waved, and the property suffered to lapse to the next heir; but in the mean time, my good Sir, what title can the next heir show while Mrs. Shepherd is living?"

At hearing this, the young man felt perplexed, and he saw that there was some truth in the remark, that law is law. "But are you quite sure that Mrs. Shepherd, as you are pleased to call her, is actually the heir-at-law to this property? The connexion seems to me very remote, and the descent rather circuitous."

"Sir," interrupted the lawyer, "the law of descent is —"

"Thank you, thank you," interposed Frederick; "I can't understand the matter, I dare say, if you explain it ever so clearly; I never could understand law. I merely ask, are you quite confident of the undoubted title of the person in question to this estate? You seem

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to have been collecting evidence to prove the fact, but may there not be some individual now living, who has not seen the advertisements, and who has quite as good a claim as this Mrs. Shepherd? Have you searched all the registers and all the records?"

"Upon my word, Sir," responded the lawyer, "you seem very anxious to set up some rival claimant; but I can tell you, if that will be any gratification to you, that there is a little opposition attempted to be set up against us."

"Ay, indeed?" said Frederick; "and suppose that Mrs. Shepherd does not feel disposed to contest the point at law?"

"Oh, Sir, don't be alarmed on that head; we will contest the point for her. I assure you, if you have any apprehensions about the expense, none of it will fall upon Mrs. Shepherd or Mr. Stratton."

Wordsworth has said, "The world is too much with us:" he is right; the world has an

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influence over us all, ay, over the very best and most independent of us, which we cannot very easily resist; and one reason why we don't resist it is, that we are hardly aware of it.—Frederick Stratton had expressed a very hearty contempt for the world and its opinions, but he did feel not a little mortified at hearing the little pert puppy of a lawyer speak of his mother and father as Mrs. Shepherd and Mr. Stratton. So hereby another shock was given to his feelings, and another check to the confidence of his anti-social theories. He felt that though the world is exceedingly absurd in its notions, and though there is great weakness in submitting to its caprices, yet that it is not possible to oppose it in every point.

He also found that Mr. Shepherd's legal adviser was not to be argued with upon the principles which had influenced the mind of Frederick Stratton. Nevertheless, he impatiently replied, "Sir, it is not the expense of the litiga-

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tion that I am alluding to, but I speak only of the unpleasantness of an exposure of family secrets."

"Yes, yes," responded the man of law; "that is unpleasant, very; but it cannot always be avoided. I have had, in the course of my practice, which has been pretty extensive, several instances of unpleasant exposures: but we must make the best of them; and one comfort is, that the world soon forgets that sort of thing."

"But in the present case, methinks you are making the worst of the matter. You are about making an exposure merely on the speculation of the possibility of success."

During this conversation Mr. Shepherd was amusing himself with staring out of the window, and to him Frederick directed neither his looks nor his conversation; for he perceived very clearly that the lawyer was the principal person, and strongly did he suspect that the claim was not quite so good as it had at first been repre-

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sented. The young gentleman had heard stories of the craftiness of hungry attorneys officiously making themselves jobs of this nature, and he not only believed all that he had heard, but gave that part of the profession credit for much more than they were guilty of. Hearing now that there was another claimant for the property in question, it occurred to him that it was possible that this other claimant might have the better title of the two, and most heartily did he wish it might be the case. But there was some difficulty in ascertaining this fact; for he had discernment enough to see that though Mr. Shepherd's legal adviser might be a very honest man, he was also an acute man, and especially so where his own interest was concerned. Frederick Stratton also could discern that Mr. Shepherd was no conjurer, and that he was a very fit client for such a legal adviser; and he strongly suspected that, though no part of the expense would fall upon Mr. Stratton, yet a very heavy portion of it would fall upon poor

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Mr. Shepherd, who might thereby, and through the instigation of his legal adviser, render himself somewhat troublesome to the family at Nettlethorpe.

Considering this, he thought it most advisable to endeavour to have some conversation with Shepherd in the absence of his legal adviser. He contented himself with asking how soon the trial would come on, and when he was informed that it would not take place for several weeks, he had hopes that he might, in the mean time, discover who was the rival claimant, and ascertain whether the whole difficulty might not be got rid of without the publicity which his father dreaded.

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CHAPTER X.

WHEN, after the interview with Captain Hartley, which took place at Frederick Stratton's lodgings, the young man resolved upon returning home, it was not because he had altered his view, or recanted his theory; but it was, according to his own view of the movement, an act of momentary impulse of compassion. A discipline, however, had been previously to that impulse gradually weaning him from some of the wildest of his extravagancies, and preparing him to act and think a little more like the rest of the world. After he had returned home, the pleasures, though melancholy, of his parental dwelling, and the winning kindness of his

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sisters, and the agreeable, common-place, sober manners of Captain Hartley, contributed still farther to humanize and quiet his restless soul. There had not been any set talk or regular discussion on these topics, on which he was in error, and probably the very absence of that kind of talk was favourable to his amendment. Argumentation, as almost every body has had occasion to observe, is by no means omnipotent; and Butler, in his Hudibras somewhere has it—

> "He that's convinced against his will
> Is of the same opinion still."

For the crotchets which get into the human brain do not ascend thither by the ladder of logic, nor will they be dismounted by the tedious process of reasoning.

Frederick Stratton, though a change, or at least an abatement, had taken place in the singularity of his humour, was not himself conscious of the change; and had any individual, either congratulated or reproached him, as the

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case might be, for having abated some of the strength or violence of his notions, he would have been seriously offended, and perhaps even much astonished. And when the distressing and mortifying circumstance of Shepherd's letter had compelled Mr. Stratton to expose to his son the condition of his life, however gallantly the young man might affect to bear up against it, it is a fact, that he did wish that it had been otherwise; and while he was discoursing with Tom Shepherd and his legal adviser, though he imagined that it was on his father's account solely, and as a mere gratuitous act of benevolence that he was endeavouring to abate the evil, or prevent the exposure, yet there was a feeling in his own mind, hardly recognized, certainly not acknowledged, that the prevention of publicity would also be a blessing to himself.

The sight of, and conversation with two such men as Shepherd and his lawyer, did not, indeed, lead Frederick to suppose that the world needed less rectification than he had previously

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imagined; but it tended to lead him to the conclusion, that there were in the world some individuals who were not very susceptible of philosophical regeneration. Farthermore, in conversing with these men he had his natural feelings of pride very much excited; for, with all his levelling notions, he had a little reserve to make for himself. He felt towards the world as Catiline did towards his fellow-conspirators, when in a fine speech which he made them, or which is more likely, Sallust made for him, he is represented as saying, "Use me either as your general or your fellow-soldier." They all knew very well which he liked best. Frederick Stratton also was not a perfect leveller, he had an inclination towards a little distinction for himself; and he did not feel a whit the less inclined to be distinguished from the common herd, after he had had his interview with the stupid Tom Shepherd and his crafty solicitor.

With feelings of contempt for both of them, and fears that the world contained too many

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such, he retired to his hotel, from whence he directed a letter to his father, stating all that had taken place relative to the unpleasant business, and putting, in the strongest light, his own bright hopes that the threatened storm would pass innocuously by them.

- At the hotel where Frederick lodged, there was in the public coffee-room a middle-aged gentleman of good presence, and comely appearance, wearing a wholesome aspect of contented cheerfulness, and apparently satisfied with all that is or can be. But though his brow was clear so far as care was concerned, it did not manifest the apathy of indifference, or any want of thought. On the contrary, he appeared like a man who had thought much, but who had thought successfully; who had contemplated life and its interests, not for the sake of making riddles and of tying knots, to show his own wisdom and sagacity; but had endeavoured, and that successfully, to solve the difficulties which did exist.

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Frederick was Englishman enough not to be very hasty in making advances to conversation with a stranger; but not quite so English as to look sulkily at one whom he knew not. He was then in tolerably good spirits, and so, very clearly, was the stranger, who was also an Englishman, and therefore somewhat shy. But it was manifest to both parties that there was desire on both sides to be sociable. So by means of a newspaper politely handed, and politely received; by means of a word on the weather and so forth, the ice of formality was broken, and the parties not reluctantly entered into conversation. After a very few words had been exchanged, it was manifest to Frederick that he was not conversing with one as stupid as Tom Shepherd, or as crafty as Tom Shepherd's lawyer. In fact, the young gentleman thought that he had never before met with an individual so purely rational, and so superior to common-place prejudices. He made no difficulty, therefore, of introducing mention of his views

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of society, and his wishes and hopes for the complete rectification of things in general. The stranger smiled at the young man's earnestness of manner. There had been a time when any one might have laughed outright at Frederick Stratton and his schemes of rectification, and he would not have noticed or heeded it. But his confidence was now a little abated, and a transient smile cooled his ardour. Thinking, however, that his present companion was not a prejudiced or stupid man, he ventured to say, reasoning Socratically,

"But are you not of opinion that there is something wrong in the state of society?"

The stranger good-humouredly answered him accordingly, "There is."

"And is it not desirable that that which is wrong should be corrected and made right?"

"It is desirable."

"If there be something wrong, and if it be desirable that it should be made right, by what means can it be so made right but by directing

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the attention of the world to the means of correcting evil."

"Clearly that must be the first step to improvement."

"And is not that which is right more advantageous than that which is wrong?"

"There can be no doubt of it."

"When, therefore, men know what is wrong, and how it may be corrected; and when they know that the right is more advantageous than the wrong, will they not naturally pursue that which is right?"

"No."

"No?" echoed the young gentleman. "Are not all men guided in their conduct by that which they perceive to be their interest?"

"Not one in a thousand," said the stranger. "Human beings do not act upon calculation; they act from impulse, from passion, from caprice, from any thing, in short, than calculation. All the moral and religious exhortations which are addressed to mankind, all the passionate and

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earnest appeals that are made to their feelings in favour of virtue, are on the supposition that they do not act upon calculation. If virtue, and religion, and propriety of demeanour, and benevolence in conduct, were the result of calculation, they might be taught as easily as the multiplication-table, and their influence over the mind would be as permanent and universal as the knowledge of figures. When a man has learned the multiplication-table, he knows as long as he lives, and he uniformly acts upon the knowledge, that three times three are nine; he never has a moment's doubt of the fact. In matters of calculation there is also a complete and unwavering uniformity of opinion; on other topics you can scarcely find two people to think alike."

Frederick Stratton, who was much more open to conviction than he had been before his return to Nettlethorpe, now began to think that it was possible that the same arguments would differently affect the two persons with whom he

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had been conversing at the house of Mrs. White, the tobacconist. Moreover, there came into his recollection the aristocratic pride of Mrs. White herself, who was angry that her first-floor lodger had not been designated as a gentleman. The young man thought, if one who had so apparently little to sacrifice on the score of rank as Mrs. White the tobacconist, should still stickle for dignity and consideration, there would be a very serious difficulty in bringing the world at large to rational thought and conduct on the subject of the distinctions of rank. Again, there came into the young man's thoughts the fact, that Tom Shepherd, who had as much to live upon as he could possibly enjoy, was yet miserably anxious for more; and that, in order to obtain that, he would risk what he had, and put himself to trouble and inconvenience, and inflict a painful wound upon one whom he acknowledged as a benefactor. Thinking of that fact, and of the eagerness of the legal adviser after the acquisition of wealth through

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thick and thin; thinking of these things and of much more that he had seen before without thinking, there sprang up in his mind another cloud of doubt, obscuring his prospects and abating his hopes of regenerating society.

He did not, however, feel all this very vividly and distinctly; he regarded the matter slightly and doubtingly, considering these things merely as exceptions and difficulties. And when he observed the confidence with which the stranger spoke, he felt his own confidence something abated. It is an exceedingly unpleasant thing to be convinced by another's arguments, and that is the reason why so few people are convinced by argument; they don't like it. Frederick Stratton did not like it; and therefore, as his Socratic mode of reasoning did not bid fair to convince his opponent, he attempted the English mode of reasoning in order to defend himself.

"But surely, Sir, when the world is manifestly and avowedly wrong, and it is in your power

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to correct its errors, you must think it a duty to do so."

"If I felt confident that it was in my power to correct it, I should certainly think it my duty to correct it. But do you not think that there have existed in the lapse of past years and ages, many individuals who have seen the world's errors, and have endeavoured, and have fancied themselves able, to remove or rectify these errors, and yet have failed in the attempt?"

"Very likely. But it does not follow from that, that the principle of reformation ought to be given up, because it has not succeeded to its full and most desirable extent. It is a duty we owe to society, to do good to society."

"Clearly so," said the stranger; "and it is my humble opinion, that general declamations, on general topics of complaint, are not the best mode of doing good to society. Society consists of individuals, and to individuals we may definitely extend our usefulness. A man does

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good, who fills his station in life with propriety. A country clergyman, for instance; I know such a one, and I trust there are many such. A country clergyman, who has a feeling and spirit of genuine benevolence, and is really desirous of serving his fellow-creatures, may, without setting his foot out of his own parish, or suffering his name to be heard of beyond his own immediate neighbourhood, be a greater blessing to society than multitudes whose names are public property, and who make a loud noise in the world. I am not speaking disparagingly of public and extensive benefactors, I am merely contending for the honour and utility of private benefactors. He that undertakes to change the whole aspect of society, and to produce comprehensive revolutions in the human mind, may labour to the end, and never be thanked for his pains: but he that with less ambition, and with equal benevolence, uses his moral and mental energies for the obvious and palpable benefit of them with whom he is immediately connected, is certain that he

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is doing good; he sees for himself the fruit of his labours."

"But may not a man do good at once," asked Frederick, "to the small society in which he immediately lives, and also to the world at large?"

"He may, but it is doubtful," replied the stranger. "I know many instances of persons mightily anxious to benefit the world at large, and from this, their comprehensive benevolence, their own families have suffered serious loss; and while they have been of little or no service to those whom they have attempted to benefit, they have been greatly injurious to those whom it was their duty to cherish and protect. I just now alluded to a benevolent clergyman, and, I am proud to say, I was speaking of my own brother: from him I heard a story of a young man of good family and good abilities, and altogether of good feelings, but he had taken it into his head that the world needed rectification and improvement, and for the purpose of

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effecting that improvement, he left his father's roof, wandered about the country, nobody knew where, connected himself, at one time with strolling players, at another with a gang of gypsies, scoffed at parental advice, and spurned parental authority: he once, I am told, went so far, as to take upon himself to subvert the Christian religion, because he fancied that it was injurious to society; and then suddenly another freak seized him, and he set himself up as a kind of preacher, or prophet, declaring that the world would in a few weeks come to an end. Now can you think that such conduct as this, is by any means adapted to do good, either to the world at large, or to the individual himself? Real good can only be effected where there is steadiness of purpose, and definiteness of application; but when any individual, especially a young and inexperienced person, attempts a great and comprehensive change, he finds, and indeed he must find, that there will be frequent changes in his opinion;

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and what at one time appeared to him very peculiarly desirable, at another may seem to be injurious, and altogether to be avoided."

The stranger paused, and begged pardon for having made so long an harangue. "You need not make any apologies," replied Frederick, "I am pleased to hear you: I hope I am open to conviction; and perhaps you will allow that I am indeed candid and open to conviction, when I tell you that I am the person whom you have been describing."

The stranger felt, and looked confused. "I beg your pardon, Sir," he replied, "but I was not by any means aware of that: you might have thought me personal."

"No such thing," replied Frederick; "and even if you had been personal, you were not to be blamed. You thought, or you might have thought, that a little good advice might be useful to me."

"I assure you, Sir," answered the gentleman, "you were altogether a stranger to me. But

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judging from present appearances, I suppose that you have, in a great measure, reformed your feelings and opinions on these matters."

"I cannot say, Sir, that any great revolution has taken place in my opinions; though I have consented, as a matter of benevolence to my own family, to reside with them again, and I have certainly thought differently on some minor topics. I will agree with you, that when the question of general reformation is taken up, there will be occasional changes in our opinions of what may be expedient."

"Well, Sir, if you please, we will drop the discussion; and I beg again to assure you that I had not the least intention or thought of wounding your feelings, when I introduced a reference to you. I hope we shall be better acquainted. How long do you stay in town?"

Frederick then told his companion, whom we may now call Mr. Brownlow, that the time of his stay was uncertain, depending on events over which he had no control.

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"I reside," said Mr. Brownlow, "not many miles from London; and if you can find leisure to favour me with your company, I have a bed at your service."

The young gentleman took the card that was offered him, and the parties separated.

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CHAPTER XI.

As there was no immediate necessity for his calling again very early on Mr. Shepherd, and as he recollected that Hartley had been very strangely and abruptly sent away from Nettlethorpe, Frederick Stratton, on the following morning, found his way to the Captain's lodgings. Him he found surrounded with books and studying mathematics, as a preparatory exercise to taking holy orders. We are indebted to the wisdom of our ancestors for many things, and among others for having found out that no man can inculcate religious principles without previously and closely studying mathematics.

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Captain Hartley did not much like the study of mathematics, but he bore patiently with it, because he knew, that when he had once passed an examination, he might very safely, as he would very surely, forget all that he had learned. The Captain was such a quiet man that nothing disturbed him; and when Frederick Stratton presented himself, instead of looking coldly and drily at the young man before the explanation was given, he received him very cordially, thinking it quite time enough to be offended when he had heard whether or no there was any thing worth being offended at.

Frederick, as in this case was proper, began, and said, "Captain Hartley, I have to beg ten thousand pardons for our most extraordinary behaviour; but there was a cause for it." Here the young man's voice trembled, and his hand shook, and he could not proceed so glibly as he had begun.

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Hartley was grieved for him, and said, "No serious misfortune, I hope?"

Frederick shook his head and replied, "I am sorry to say that my father received on the morning of your departure from Nettlethorpe a letter which he felt to be a very serious misfortune." Then fixing his eyes upon Hartley, he continued with great earnestness, "Dare I tell you?"

Hartley replied, "Tell me, if it will be any relief, or if I can be of any service to you."

"No," said Frederick; "no, you cannot be of any service in the affair. It is a difficulty, a perplexity."

Frederick was unable to proceed; Hartley rose and went to him, taking his hand, and in a very earnest and serious tone said, "My good friend, excuse, excuse the liberty I am about to take. I know it is a matter of great delicacy, and I am aware of your father's high spirit and of yours too; but I know you will forgive me: I have it, or very shortly shall have it in my

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power to be of more service to Mr. Stratton than you are aware of. Since I saw you, I have had intelligence of an agreeable nature, by which I learn that a very considerable property devolves to me."

"Oh, my worthy friend," interrupted Frederick Stratton, "I thank you most heartily for your kind intentions, but that is not the matter. It is not a pecuniary difficulty that perplexes us."

"Is it," asked Hartley, who could not help thinking of Laura Stratton—"is it a difficulty in which I can be of any service? Tell me, perhaps I may."

Frederick, after much more hesitation, told him the whole story from beginning to end. Hartley listened with astonishment, and almost incredulity; and when the narrative was ended, he again took hold of the young man's hand, and with exulting cheerfulness exclaimed, "Then I can assist you; I can extricate you from the whole difficulty at once: the property

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in question is mine; mine beyond the shadow of a doubt."

"Yours?" ejaculated Frederick, in wild astonishment,—"Yours? Impossible!"

"No; not at all impossible; and I can very soon demonstrate the truth of the assertion. There is a dirty fellow of an attorney who has set up another claimant, of whom he designs to make a booty, but he can never bring the cause into court. The man is a most outrageous simpleton, and has already thrown away upon this business more than he can well afford."

"But had we not better undeceive him?" said Frederick.

"If it were possible, it is certainly desirable. But he is one of those whom it is more easy to deceive than to undeceive."

"Well, do you really think that the matter will not be brought into court?" asked Frederick.

"I am almost sure it will not," said the Captain. "This attorney is merely making a fool of the man to plunder him."

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"What an infamous shame it is," exclaimed Frederick, "that such things should be permitted."

"True," replied Hartley; "but the shame that they exist is not any greater than the difficulty of preventing them. This, however, I will do; I will direct my solicitor to call upon the other, and use certain arguments which will prevent, I think, any farther prosecution of the claim. But come, you must spend the remainder of the day with me, and I will lay aside my studies, and give you my best attention."

Frederick willingly accepted the offer, and felt his mind not a little relieved at this turn of affairs. "Now," said Hartley, "where shall we go first? I must introduce you to some of my literary acquaintance. Suppose we call upon Spratt."

"Spratt!" repeated Frederick; "Who is Spratt?"

"What! did you never hear of Spratt?" said the Captain, with an accent of astonish-

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ment; "I thought everybody knew him. Well, I will introduce you, and I think you will say he is a very clever fellow."

The two friends accordingly set out in search of the celebrated Spratt; who, by the way, was not quite so celebrated as Captain Hartley thought he was. The Captain having resolved to change his profession, had begun to feel a powerful sympathy with every thing that wore the aspect of literature, and it was his greatest happiness and pride to be acquainted with any one connected with the press; and he knew so little of the literary world, that he looked upon any one who had written and printed as a being of superior order.

Spratt was at home; not quite disengaged, for Theodore Clarke was with him; but Captain Hartley was such a valued friend that he was always welcome.

"Let me introduce my friend Mr. Stratton," said the Captain. And forthwith Mr. Spratt was very glad to see Mr. Stratton.

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"Hartley," said Spratt, "are you going to Riddleton's *conversazione* to-night? I can give you cards for yourself and your friend."

The offer was cheerfully and thankfully accepted.

"Are you upon anything new?" asked the Captain.

"New!" replied Spratt, "I am reviewing a new book, and I am at a loss how to go on; for our editor sent me the book last night, without any title-page, and desired me to have it done by the time that he returns from Brighton, to which place he set off this very morning. Now, I don't know what to say about it, for here is neither bookseller's nor author's name to it."

The critic handed the book to Captain Hartley, and said, "Perhaps you can tell me?"

Hartley knew that he did not know, but did not like to say so; nobody does. So he took the book and looked at it as wisely as if he might be able to ascertain or plausibly to conjecture

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whose the book was; and he, after a few minutes, returned it to Spratt, and professed himself at a loss; though he could not help thinking, as he said, that he had heard something about it.

"Well," said Frederick, "can you not write your review of the book, and leave space for the insertion of the title and author's name afterwards."

"Yes, but then I may blame where I ought to praise, and praise where I ought to blame."

"And does not your review," said Captain Hartley, "profess most explicitly to give a fair and honest review of all literary productions, without any partiality, and only judging by the merits of the book."

"And what review," said Spratt, "professes to the contrary. Now there was one of our best writers the other day, for some crotchet or other, turned his back upon us, and went over to the enemy. Suppose this work should be his, and suppose I should praise it, what would our editor and proprietors say to me?

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And how foolish we should look in the eyes of the world."

"Then you are by no means impartial," said Frederick Stratton; "you are not reviewing the book, but the writer, or the publisher."

"Why," replied Spratt, "we are mortal and human, and all have our likes and dislikes, and it is not easy to help expressing them."

"I can easily imagine," interposed Hartley, "that a feeling of friendship towards an author personally, may induce you to think sincerely favourably of his work, and I can also think it very possible that you may not discern in the writings of an enemy or opponent those beauties which another person might discover. But I cannot understand upon what principle you adopt not only the language of severe condemnation, but sometimes of almost personal insult, towards writers of whom you personally know nothing."

"That is easy enough to be understood," answered Spratt. "The severity of our con-

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demnation of some books gives force to our praise of others. Besides that, there is a great pleasure to the reader in a severe and pungent article, it is as good fun as a bull-bait or a badger hunt."

"Ay," said Frederick Stratton, somewhat pettishly and sharply, "the comparison is good. It is a cruel sport."

"Not so cruel as you imagine," said the critic; "for there is great pleasure in writing the article, and multitudes have pleasure in reading it; while there is only one individual who suffers pain, and that is the poor author. And perhaps, after all, he does not suffer much; for he can easily persuade himself that the critic wants judgment. Again, who would think of reading a review which did not abound in the sharpness of satire. A good-humoured review is the dullest of all dull books. The writer of a severe critique gains also with the multitude a great repu-

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tation as a very clever fellow; as Candide says, 'What a prodigious genius this Signor Pococurante must be, nothing pleases him.' And what was it that formed the ground of Peter Pindar's popularity, but the severity and home-thrusts of his satire."

Frederick Stratton thought little better of critics than he did of lawyers, and he thought of both of them, that their necessity was greater than their probability of reform. Nor was he by any means more favourably disposed towards the system, when Mr. Spratt laughed heartily at his own enunciation of his own merits.

The visit to the critic was brought to a conclusion by the arrival of other visitors; and, as Hartley and Stratton left the house, the latter remarked, "I cannot imagine how these people can find time for the study which is essential to make them good critics, if they have their mornings occupied by callers, and their evenings by entertainments."

Hartley was about to answer, but he was an-

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ticipated by one much better qualified to speak upon the subject; that was Theodore Clarke, who had followed them out of the house unperceived, and who joined them uninvited.

"I can explain the matter to you easily enough," said he, "or, more properly speaking, you may explain it yourself, if you will take the trouble to read one of their criticisms, and then to read the book which they have criticised. About twenty years ago, a bookseller, by way of joke, advertised for some literary gentlemen who could review books without cutting them open; how many applications he had I do not remember, but I know that he had a great many. I myself was requested to write in a review when I was scarcely out of my teens, and when I declined, on the ground of incompetency, my friend laughed at me, and asked if I had ever read the review in question."

"I remember," said Frederick, "hearing you make some such remarks when I lived in London, but I hardly thought you were serious."

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"Oh yes," replied Theodore Clarke, "serious enough; don't you remember that I was continually telling you that you could see every thing but that which was immediately before your eyes?"

"I do remember," said Frederick, smiling, "that you used to make many impertinent observations, but I have not any distinct recollection of them."

"Well, I shall see you in the evening, so I will take my leave of you for the present."

Theodore Clarke was of those unaccountable beings of whom we scarcely know what to think, and to whom we scarcely know how to behave. He was impertinent, chattering, and intrusive, and, in his absence, we think him troublesome and disagreeable; but, when he is in our company, we cannot have the heart to behave rudely to him, or to give him a hint to be gone. He seemed to have an especial license to say what he pleased, to come and go just as the humour took him. He lived, as we have

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already seen, in most humble style, but, by some means or other, found his way into all manner of society. Whenever men of letters, as such, were at all admissible, Theodore Clarke was there. He knew every body, and was as familiar with one as another. Every body that he conversed with was, for the time being, his particular friend; and he seemed to take an interest in what concerned them, and, for the time, to live more for them than for himself. When once he had made an acquaintance, he would not easily relinquish it. As for quarrelling or coolness, he hardly knew what the words meant. He certainly was good-humoured, and was most ready to do any one a service if it lay in his power. His whole character was singular, and he appeared to throw away, by a perpetual frivolity and trifling of manner, those powers which might have distinguished him in society, or which, at all events, might have put it into his power to enjoy better furnished lodgings.

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CHAPTER XII.

WITHOUT following Hartley and Frederick Stratton through their morning's ramble, we meet them at Mr. Riddleton's *conversazione* in the evening. They went there together; the spectacle was new to them both. They were both prepared with looks, and thoughts, and words of wisdom. They were admitted by two tall, tawdry, polite, insolent footmen. Others of the party came at the same time; and these others also looked wise. The rooms were very full, and there was hardly standing-room to be had near the pier-glasses. They neither of them dared to talk common-place, even to another; they scarcely thought com-

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mon-place; in short, they did not know what to think or what to say. They moved slowly about the rooms, and looked at the company; and they saw several young gentlemen very smartly dressed, and manifestly conscious that they were so; and these young gentlemen walked about with their hats under their arms, ever and anon poking their fingers through their hair. Frederick Stratton thought for a moment that they had come to the wrong house; but his embarrassment was relieved by meeting at last with Theodore Clarke and the celebrated Spratt. Theodore Clarke was never so welcome as at this moment; and the four clustered together, and their *conversazione* began as follows; not, perhaps, much worth recording, but quite as good as the major part of that which composed the then existing buzz.

"How long have you been here?"

"Oh, not long."

"There's nobody come yet."

"Who is expected?"

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"Can't say."

"Do you think that Silversides will be here?"

"No doubt he will, but he always comes late."

"Who is that with his hands behind him, in black, a stout man, wears powder?"

"That is Riddleton himself: have not you been introduced? Come, I 'll introduce you."

The party were moving for the purpose, when Silversides himself entered the room, and bustled up to Mr. Riddleton, and the major part of the multitude urged their steps that way. And Silversides nodded to one, and shook hands with another, ay, with a great many; and he shrugged up his shoulders and looked pleased, and the whole party seemed quite alive. Then Silversides rubbed his hands, and then he took out his snuff-box, and so many fingers and thumbs were thrust into it, that it appeared as if he would not have any left for himself. And Silversides, having re-

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turned his snuff-box to his pocket, said in a half-whisper to Riddleton,

"Have you heard any thing to-day from—?"

Mr. Riddleton seemed to understand him, and answered, "Oh yes; that's all settled."

"I am glad of it," replied Silversides; and then, in a louder tone, as if for the instruction of the rest of the company, he added, "It is a pleasant thing to get rid of an unpleasant business."

At which those of the company who knew Mr. Silversides laughed, because they could see the wit of it; and those who did not know him, did not laugh, because they could not see the wit of it. Moving towards a sofa, Mr. Silversides then took a seat; and Frederick Stratton observing that he was a person of some consequence in the estimation of the party, endeavoured to get near enough to him to hear and profit by his conversation. But, in order to profit by a wise man's wisdom, it is necessary to believe him to be a wise man; and

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in order to speak with confidence, it is necessary to believe that one shall be heard with deference. The latter requisite Mr. Silversides had in abundance; but in the former, Frederick Stratton was sadly deficient: for he took nothing for granted, save and except his own peculiar crotchets and theories. The party that was clustered round Silversides was evidently expecting something brilliant. And one of the party began to talk about Lord Byron; for in those days every body talked about him. The question apparently started was the secret of poetical impression.

"It certainly is not in poetry," said Silversides.

"Do you intend," said a young gentleman, who was leaning over the end of the sofa, "to affirm that poetry, as poetry, will not force its own way to public approbation?"

"I do," answered Silversides. "Pure poetry, like virgin gold, requires something of an alloy to fit it for public use. The poetical alloy is of

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various kinds. Sometimes harmony and beauty of cadence, sometimes religion, sometimes scandal, sometimes sensuality,—'twould be invidious to give instances."

"But which of these is the alloy which gives popularity to Lord Byron's poetry?"

"None of these," replied Silversides: "I should rather incline to say that the popularity of Lord Byron proceeds from his thoroughly English feelings."

"You are joking."

"No; I am as serious as ever I was in my life."

"That you may be, and yet not mean what you say."

Silversides laughed, for he liked that compliment, and pursued: "I am indeed serious. I think Lord Byron thoroughly English. Does not he grumble most gloriously? Is there not in all his verses a fine and noble spirit of discontent and peevishness? Does he not rail in good set terms against clouds and fogs and

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damps; and is it not the glory of an Englishman to be highly susceptible of the influences of dull weather? Lord Byron, again, has all the English pride of rank, and all the English frumpish impatience of authority; railing against kings with all his might, yet manifestly proud of that distinction of title which has its existence only where kings are cultivated. Lord Byron, again, is English in his love of solitude, and in his efforts to make the groans of his solitude reach the ear of society. Lord Byron, again, is English inasmuch as he raves about ancient Greece in a style which can only be learned and imbibed in an English public school. These are the circumstances which give an impetus to his popularity. I don't deny his genius; I don't question it; I don't doubt it. I merely say, it is not the essence of poetry, but it is the accident, which gives it popularity and power. The accident will not do without the essence, nor the essence without the accident."

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When Silversides had finished this harangue, he happened to turn his eyes towards Frederick Stratton, who had been one of his most attentive auditors, and Frederick felt himself almost as much invited as he was inclined to speak. He therefore said, "I have been accustomed to regard Lord Byron as a citizen of the world, without prejudices or partialities, except that he felt somewhat disgusted with the intense nationality of the English people."

"He feels that nationality, I believe, as strongly as any one; and he knows that without the sympathy of the English nation he is nothing; for it is only by the English that he can be thoroughly understood, and his poetry heartily enjoyed. I don't find fault with him for grumbling and railing—that is part of his inspiration, whereby he makes himself agreeable. There is, however, one more circumstance by which he has strongly laid hold of the public sympathy; that circumstance is, to use a familiar phrase, a bit of gossip, a laying open of

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domestic and personal matters. Himself is in his poetry; and whether under the character of Childe Harold he designs to draw his own portrait or not, it is very evident that he has a strong fellow-feeling with the Childe; and by means of his minor poems, compared with Childe Harold, much of his own personal history may be inferred. And there is nothing in the world that men love so well as a bit of gossip. Even in the daily newspapers, the editors of which understand the public taste exceedingly well, how minutely attentive are they to giving all that they possibly can of the private history of such, as are by any accident held up to public gaze. If a loving couple in St. Giles's are had up to a public office, for the magisterial rectification of any domestic grievance, the whole particulars are recorded for the edification of the public. But the higher the rank, the greater the interest that is taken in the thoughts, words, and deeds recorded of them. What can be a more tempting title than "private memoirs?" It is not, perhaps, every individual

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who could make his private memoirs interesting; but I do verily believe, if almost any individual bearing a title of nobility, or in any manner distinguished from the Smiths, Browns, Greens, and Jacksons, of the multitudinous world, were to write his own private history, and record his family quarrels, and publish his love-letters, he would find myriads of readers."

Frederick and the rest of the party listened very patiently, for Mr. Silversides was always listened to with much deference. Frederick, however, when an interval was allowed him to speak, said, "But is it not an evil that such an idle curiosity should exist, and that there should not be a more comprehensive and extensive feeling for the welfare of society?"

"I think not," said Silversides: "I am of opinion that there can be no general sympathies antecedent to particular ones. The good feelings of the mind are gradually developed—charity begins at home; it is only wrong that it too frequently ends where it ought to begin.

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If any man imagines that, without any home affections, he can have an affection for society at large, I think he mistakes. I wish no harm to the people of China, or to the copper-coloured Indians; but I cannot, in the nature of things, have the same sympathy with them, as I have with people whom I see and converse with every day."

In the group that surrounded Mr. Silversides, there was standing a young lady of graceful form and lovely aspect, leaning upon the arm of an elder one, who might be her mother or aunt. Frederick Stratton had not seen her, and Mr. Silversides had been so occupied with talking, that he had not observed her; but at that moment, by an accidental movement in the party, she became visible; and Mr. Silversides sprang from his seat with polite haste, and addressing himself to the ladies with great cordiality, said,

"I beg your pardon, you have not been in the room long?"

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"Just long enough," replied the elder lady, "to hear your declamation in favour of gossip."

"And in vindication of the particular affections," added he, bowing at the same time to the young lady, who blushed and smiled, and whose blush and smile gave additional loveliness to features, which, in repose, seemed beautiful enough already.

"And I think," said Mr. Silversides, still addressing himself to the young lady, "that you can yourself afford me an illustration."

The young lady looked serious, and made no reply.

"You have no wish, I apprehend," continued the gentleman, "to hear of the death of any bird that flies; yet, if myriads should perish in the Canary Islands, you would not feel half so much grief as you would, were you to lose your own pet canary-bird."

"And yet," responded the young lady, in a

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voice as sweet as her looks, " I should feel more for the death of canary-birds, than for the death of any other birds."

" That, you see," said Mr. Silversides, addressing himself to Mr. Stratton, " still farther corroborates what I have been saying; the particular not only precede but produce the general affections. This lady has a bird, cherishes it, and feeds it, and loves it; and from loving, the individual feels a sympathy in some degree with the species."

Frederick Stratton paid more attention to the lovely looks of the young unknown, than he did to the talking of Mr. Silversides; and so pleased was he with the amiable and gentle expression of the lady's countenance, that he found a difficulty in withdrawing his attention. Such was the power of that fair and lovely face, with its intelligent and kind aspect, that a revolution was produced in the mind of Frederick Stratton on two points at once. In the first place, from thinking a *conversazione* a most ab-

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surd and stupid occupation, he began to believe it to be the most rational of all possible modes of spending an evening; and in the second place, though he had hitherto considered the keeping of canary, or any other birds, as a foolish waste of time, and an idle and useless direction of the attention, yet now he began to have an affection for the very bird in possession of the fair unknown.

The revolutions of the multitudinous assemblage brought Frederick and his party into contact with another haranguer, who was declaiming in good set terms against all manner of common-place, past, present, and to come. This said haranguer was exceedingly eloquent and very striking; his eloquence was of that nature, that it was impossible for any report to do it justice. And yet, though the talker was railing against the institutions of society, in such wise as would formerly have delighted Frederick Stratton, and have gratified him to his heart's content, yet there was a harshness

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and ill humour, with which his then humanized feelings had no sympathy. Frederick envied the man's eloquence, but pitied his malignity.

How strangely constituted is human nature! And if the grosser and more sensual part of the species be aptly compared to the grovelling swine, not with less aptitude may a comparison be taken from the same animal to the freaks and vagaries of the human mind; for, after reasoning has exhausted its powers, and persuasion has preached itself hoarse, when eloquence has not a single trope, figure or metaphor left, when nothing seems to remain but to sit down in despair of producing conviction—in the very stillness of that hopeless moment, up starts the mind, and away it runs freely, merrily, cheerfully, in that very direction into which it seemed that no power on earth could force it.

It had thus fared with Frederick Stratton. He had been argued with, and talked to over and over again, and he had heard all possible reasonings against the absurdity of his notions

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and his crotchets, and nothing seemed to touch him. He is let alone, and then he is quietly and steadily coming round to rationality. Not, however, was a complete revolution at this moment wrought in his feelings and opinions, but he felt that there was a change, and he was open to conviction. He so far coincided with Mr. Silversides in the notion, that the particular not only precede, but also produce the general affections, that he would fain learn from the loveliness of the unknown fair one, how to regard humanity in general with extensive benevolence. None, however, of his companions could give him information, as to the name of the young lady, or her residence. Spratt only knew that he had seen her at the same house before, and believed that she was related to Mr. Riddleton, or was a visitor residing under his roof.

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CHAPTER XIII.

By the events and thoughts of the preceding day, Frederick Stratton, on the morning after he had accompanied his friend Hartley to Mr. Riddleton's *conversazione*, felt himself consciously and decidedly revolutionized in his notions of things in general; and he revolved many things in his mind, and felt at once pleasure and pain in his thoughts. For that which had been to him a matter of indifference in former days, became to him a source of uneasiness and anxiety; and he also derived pleasure from the fact, that his friend the Captain was likely to inherit a property which would be a means of good to the one acquiring it, and a satisfaction

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to the one losing it. Most of all, however, were his thoughts occupied with a recollection of the young lady who possessed a favourite canary bird. He was thoroughly convinced that she was adorned and blessed with every possible and desirable mental and moral grace; he recollected with the utmost distinctness and vividness the exquisitely lovely expression of her features; and he heard over again the sweet tones of her gentle voice; but who she was, and where, when, and how he could ever find an opportunity of seeing her again, was among those matters which were to him inexplicable.

His first employment in the morning was making inquiry of the landlord of his hotel concerning the gentleman from whom he had received so polite an invitation. It depends much on circumstances whether such an invitation be complimentary or not. Generally speaking, a young man may consider himself honoured by gratuitous notice and voluntary of friendship on the part of an elder one.

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From the answers which the landlord gave to Frederick's inquiries concerning Mr. Brownlow, it appeared to the young man that he had reason to think himself honoured by the attention which had been paid him. He therefore wrote a note to his new friend, accepting his invitation, and fixing an early day for a visit.

In the meantime, he was most happy in having it in his power to give to his father so good and favourable an account of the prospect of getting rid of the unpleasant business; and while he was meditating to what employment he should devote the day then beginning, his never-failing friend, Theodore Clarke, made his appearance. This genius seemed to have a species of ubiquity; he was always visible to all his acquaintance, and it was considered by them a great rarity if they missed seeing him for a day or two.

Whether Theodore thought it or not, in good truth, he always looked as if he thought himself welcome to whomsoever he presented

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himself, and when he felt inclined to bestow his tediousness upon any one, it was always done with the air of one conscious of bestowing an agreeable and welcome favour.

"How did you like your amusement last night?" was his first question.

Frederick, with great sincerity, replied, "Exceedingly! I felt obliged to Mr. Spratt for introducing me, though I cannot say I like the man; at least, not altogether; he may have some good qualities, but his notions of criticism do not quite please me."

"Oh, nonsense!" answered Clarke, "you must not mind all he says. He is no worse than any of the rest; and if he does now and then say a severe thing, he means no harm. Besides, who minds criticism? nobody believes in it now."

"There may be something in that," answered Frederick Stratton; "but it may perhaps be also necessary now and then to be a little severe, just as it were by way of

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purifying the atmosphere of literature, and in order to check the too great increase of worthless books."

"Oh, my most candid and considerate friend," cried Clarke, almost laughing aloud, "you are now carrying the joke rather too far. I cannot believe that any one in his senses ever thinks that critics, or more properly speaking, writers of reviews, can fix the fate of a book. Their best wit is to form a shrewd guess of what the public will think of it, and use it accordingly."

"But I have ever considered criticism as directing the public taste, and pointing out the true standard of a correct judgment."

"Ay, then," replied Theodore, "you have never considered at all. Pray did you ever hear of one Dr. Johnson, who wrote a little book called 'Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia?'"

"To be sure I have," said Frederick; "and what of him?"

"Merely I was going to say, that three or

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four days ago I met with a criticism on that book, written when it was first published, and before the critic knew who was the author of it. And never have I seen in any modern review, language more insulting and degrading than was used to that author and of that book; yet the book has been read, and lives, and must live. Several years ago also I read in the Edinburgh Review a most hearty and contemptuous vituperation of Mongomery's poem called the 'Wanderer of Switzerland.' But the public would not suffer its taste to be influenced and directed in that instance by the Edinburgh Review; and though the critic predicted the speedy extinction and utter oblivion of the book, yet it has passed through several editions since that time, and it yet lives, and the author's reputation stands high on the pedestal which that has raised for him."

"Well," replied Frederick, who was bent upon being pleased with every thing, "it matters not. And it is one consolation to think that

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I have not so much suffering to sympathize with as I had imagined."

"But stay, my good friend," interrupted Theodore Clarke; "let us have done with criticism, and give our attention to something better. You remember the young lady with whom you were so struck at Mr. Riddleton's *conversazione* yesterday?"

"To be sure," said Frederick, with a little coolness of manner, and an effort of indifference, for he was not best pleased that Theodore Clarke should be so far in his confidence as to be in the secret of his affairs of the heart.

"Because," answered Theodore, noticing his indifference, "you were anxious last night to know who and what she was, and I can tell you now."

"Indeed!" replied the young gentleman; "and pray who is she?"

Frederick Stratton thought he had uttered that inquiry with a very proper tone of indifference. And so he had, for Mr. Clarke

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thought by his manner of speaking that he was not so much interested as he had been the preceding evening. But Theodore was never in the habit of suppressing any information that he was in possession of, for if others had no pleasure in hearing it, he always had a pleasure in telling it—and therefore, for his own satisfaction he said, "I breakfasted this morning with Spratt, and I learn from him that the young lady is a ward of Mr. Riddleton, and that her name is Brownlow; her other guardian with whom she generally resides is a Mr. Brownlow of Hertfordshire."

Frederick Stratton barely condescended to thank his friend for the information thus communicated; nor did he say a word on the subject of his intended visit to the young lady's guardian. And now there was a sad perplexity rising in the mind of the young gentleman, who, from having recently been a social Quixote, and a species of martyr to the cause of what he considered rationality and rectification, was

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becoming a sentimental lover; and the perplexity by which he was so disturbed was, that it was probable that his visit to Mr. Brownlow might be paid and finished before the young lady returned. Moreover, another difficulty or doubt presented itself, and that was to account for the fact of Brownlow himself being resident at a hotel, while his ward was at the house of a relative. It was possible there might be two persons of the name of Brownlow in the county of Hertford.

All these perplexities and doubts were useful to the young man, inasmuch as they withdrew his mind from its crotchets, and brought him within the influence and action of the ordinary, and, therefore, useful and valuable sympathies of our nature.

Theodore Clarke was, to all intents and purposes, a most disinterested man; he was pleased with any one who would tolerate his company, and he would readily give up his time to any of his ten thousand friends. When, therefore,

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Frederick Stratton said to him, "What are you going to do with yourself to-day?" he replied, very readily, "I have no engagement; I am quite at your service."

It would have been very barbarous, and altogether rude, indeed, if, after this, Frederick Stratton had said or intimated that he was in no need of his services; it was not in Stratton's nature to be so rude, he therefore said, "Then you must spend the day with me."

To this proposal, of course, a ready assent was given, and the two were just on the point of leaving the hotel for a morning's ramble, when Captain Hartley presented himself in apparent hurry and great agitation.

"Stratton!" he exclaimed, "you must come with me this moment."

"Where?" cried he; "What is the matter? You alarm me, Hartley. What can you mean? Have you heard any thing from Nettlethorpe?"

As hastily as the questions were asked, Hartley replied, "No, no, I have no ill news, but

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you must come with me: Mr. Clarke, I know, will excuse us, but it is a matter of moment."

Mr. Clarke was the most excusing man alive, and he had, in the course of his life, much of this nature to excuse. Hartley and Frederick Stratton were in a few minutes seated in a hackney coach, which was ordered by the former to Whitechapel.

As soon as they were seated, and Frederick heard the order, he asked, "Are we going to see this man Shepherd?"

"We are," answered Hartley; "and unless we make good haste there, and good use of our time when we get there, we shall find the man and his rascally attorney on their way to Nettlethorpe."

"On their way to Nettlethorpe?" exclaimed Frederick; "Are they mad? What would they have?"

"They would have," replied Hartley, "at least the attorney would, more than you or I can give them, I fear. They have found out,

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at last, that there is not any thing of a foundation for their claim, and now the attorney is presenting a bill of costs, which Shepherd cannot possibly pay: and unless we can do or say something to prevent it, they will go to Nettlethorpe."

"It must not be," said Frederick; "the sight of that man would be the death of my father."

Then the young man folded his arms and sat in silent meditation, ruminating over the past, and mourning inwardly at the perversity and painfulness of his destiny. Most provoking and perplexing were all these occurrences, and every thing seemed to go wrong. All nature and all being appeared to him in this moment miserable, and painful, and deplorable. He thought again of his past indifference, and yet with no wish to recall it. He saw no end to his perplexities, and no solution of his difficulties. He felt as the greatest calamity that condition of his birth, of which formerly he

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had taken no heed. He was lamenting his hard lot that, just as he seemed to be about to enjoy the pleasures and reputations of society, he should be placed in a situation which, for the first time in his life, he felt to be humiliating. He was out of humour with every body, and every thing.

But his agitations and meditations were soon brought to a pause by the arrival of the coach at the house of Mrs. White the tobacconist. Frederick left his friend Captain Hartley to be spokesman, and did not again offend Mrs. White, by inquiring irreverently for the gentleman who occupied her first floor. They were very soon introduced to the troublesome Tom Shepherd, who was sitting in a stupid state waiting for the arrival of his lawyer. They knew it would be next to labour lost to discuss the subject with him. But they thought it possible, perhaps, to extract some information from him as to the extent of the knave's demand, and the probability of his own readiness to go abroad

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again and reside in the quiet which he had preserved unbroken till this unpleasant affair was started. Frederick and the Captain both thought it advisable to behave towards the man with the utmost civility and courtesy, and in their presence, without the aid and countenance of his legal adviser, he felt embarrassed.

"I am sorry to hear, Mr. Shepherd," said Frederick Stratton, "that you have any intentions of going to Nettlethorpe. It cannotanswer any good purpose."

Mr. Shepherd hung his head sheepishly on one side, and said, "Why, Sir, for the matter of that, I don't want to be troublesome to Muster Stratton, only my lawyer says how he must be paid, and I am sure I don't see how I am to pay him out of my allowance. And he says how he will send me to gaol, if so be as I don't settle with him; and I am sure I thought the business would have been all done and over by this time. And I have got a fine sight of money to pay for my lodging here. I am sure

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I wish I had never comed over about it; I wish with all my heart I was back again, and I—I—"

Towards the latter part of his speech he was confused, and Frederick Stratton saved him from the trouble of proceeding, by saying, "It certainly is a pity that you should have taken such a step as this, for by so doing you have violated the secrecy which you were bound in honour to preserve. You have now divulged the affair to your lawyer, and he may talk of it every where."

"I am sorry for it, I am sure," said Mr. Shepherd; "but he told me it was a large estate what was my rights, and I did not want not to have all for myself; I should have let madam had her own share on it quietly enough, and should have gone back to France, and never have troubled Muster Stratton no more about nothing."

"But," said Frederick, "you must, first of all, have told this lawyer of the nature of

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your claim: he could only have known it from you?"

"Why to be sure, and for certain, and that's what he did, no doubts; but then when I see in the English newspapers such an advertisement, and I know'd Madam was akin to them people, I thought that it might e'en be all as well, if the matter was looked after; and so, as—as—a friend of mine said how she knowd of a lawyer,—he knowd—he said he knowd of a lawyer, what did that kind of business, so as not to put one to any charges if he did not succeed, I thought I might as well, you know, have what was to be had like, 'cause it was my rights in law, and then I should never have wanted any thing more from Muster Stratton; but I must have something now to pay the lawyer."

"But," said Frederick, "I understood you to say this very moment, that your lawyer was not to put you to any expense if he did

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not succeed; and yet in the same breath you say, you must have something to pay your lawyer?"

"Why, Sir," answered Mr. Shepherd, "you don't understand. The thing is, the lawyer don't charge me nothing for law like, only as he says, and to be sure that's fair enough, that he must be paid for his own incidental expenses, and for travelling and the like, and he speaks very fair, that's for certain. And he says that there's some lawyers what would have made me pay a great deal more, and he says he is one of the most reasonable as ever was, and belike he may be, for he speaks very fair: that you would say yourself if you was to hear him."

To all this most excellent logic and most eloquent defence of the lawyer's fairness, Frederick Stratton made no reply: for in fact it was unanswerable and incontrovertible. But he could not help thinking that there was in the present connexion of lawyer and client as fine an illustration of flat and sharp as ever was seen. However,

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he was desirous of knowing how much this precious one was fair enough to charge, and he therefore put the question directly and plainly to Mr. Shepherd. "And may I ask you how much your friend the lawyer is pleased to demand as a remuneration for his incidental expenses?"

"I can't say exactly," answered Mr. Shepherd, "but he said that as how that he should be very much out of pocket if I could not manage to raise a matter of a hundred and fifty pounds, and he said that when I had paid him that I should have had all the law for nothing; and I know very well that law is not to be had for nothing every day. I assure you, Sir, nobody can speak fairer than my lawyer; and he says I am under great obligations to him, and no doubts but what I am; only you know I don't exactly understand the matter."

Frederick saw plainly enough that the poor man did not understand the matter, and he saw too plainly that the lawyer did. And though one hundred and fifty pounds might not be

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quite so much as some lawyers would charge, yet it seemed that the amount was serious enough from one who professed to make no charge.

"But," said Frederick, "if my father will send you the money, why need you go down to Nettlethorpe to trouble him about the matter?"

"If so be, Sir," answered Shepherd, "that, Muster Stratton will send me the money, I don't see why I need go down. Only my lawyer, who is a very fair spoken man as ever was, and has my interest very much at heart, he said perhaps it was better that I should see Muster Stratton hisself, and then we might come to an understanding like."

"I tell you what, Mr. Shepherd," said Frederick, more firmly, "it is more likely you will come to a misunderstanding. I cannot answer for what my father may say or do if you should go down to Nettlethorpe to endeavour to compel him to give you money. You know you have already betrayed the secret, and now it is once

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divulged there is no saying where it may stop. You will look very foolish if my father should refuse to give you a single shilling, and discontinue the annuity you have had so long. I cannot at all answer for what he may do should he be provoked. You had better consider all this. Now let me advise you, as a friend, don't be in too great a hurry to go to Nettlethorpe: you may repent it."

Mr. Shepherd listened to this discourse with more than usual gravity, and looked when it was finished more than usually silly. At length, after much perplexity of look, and many attempts to speak, he said, almost crying, "Well, but lau! Sir, how shall I get back to France if my lawyer sends me to prison here in England?"

That was a question which few but such geniuses as Tom Shepherd would think of asking, and which greater geniuses than Frederick Stratton could not very satisfactorily answer. Frederick made the reply which most naturally

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occurred to him. "You should have thought of that, Mr. Shepherd, before you came to England."

Upon this Mr. Shepherd was most sadly perplexed, and he found himself altogether uncomfortable, and in a word, he knew not which way to turn. Had he been a man of education, he would have been in this present conjuncture reminded of the fable of the dog and the shadow; but as he was not a man of education he knew of no parallel case, and he thought himself the most unfortunate man living. Now indeed did he want an adviser,—not a legal adviser, he had already had too much of that sort of thing.

By way of terminating the interview, Frederick Stratton said; "Well, Mr. Shepherd, I will say thus much, if you will promise me that you will not go to Nettlethorpe, I will write to my father and state the circumstances, and endeavour to persuade him to do something for you. But if you go to Nettlethorpe it will

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be at your peril; and I would recommend you to intimate to your fair-spoken friend the lawyer, that he will not be likely to reap any benefit from that excursion."

"Well, but Sir," Shepherd added, still whining, "when shall I hear? because I wants to go home, that is I mean, back to France."

"Oh, you shall hear in a very few days; but as you have brought yourself into this perplexity, you must wait to be extricated from it as patiently as you can."

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CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN Hartley and Frederick Stratton then departed from the gentleman who occupied the first-floor at Mrs. White's, and as they departed they were in better spirits than as they went; for the Captain very heartily and sincerely sympathized with Frederick in his cares and troubles, and most willingly would make any sacrifice or exertion to render his friend a service. The Captain liked Frederick Stratton from the very first moment of their acquaintance, even when the young man was in all the height and wildness of his most extravagant fancies; but now that he had come to what the world calls a more rational way of thinking, the

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Captain was still more pleased with him. Hartley had begun to regard the Stratton family as his principal and indeed almost only acquaintance; not that he had absolutely cut all his city friends, but his habits and theirs differed so widely that there was not much sympathy between them.

By this excursion of the friends from Frederick Stratton's hotel to Mr. Shepherd's lodgings, the whole of the day had not been exhausted, and when they returned Theodore Clarke was of course not there. Now neither of them cared much for Theodore, therefore they did not anxiously seek him; they took it of course for-granted, that he would not be much at a loss how to dispose of his time amongst the many myriads of his friends: and it is a fact, that though Theodore knew every body, he could sometimes scarcely find one of the every body at leisure to give him their time and attention; still it was his happiness never to feel weary or disappointed. He

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would go from street to street, from Temple-bar to Paddington, and back again, making ten thousand calls, and finding nobody at home, and yet remaining all the while in perfect good humour and placid self-possession. So it happened to him on the present occasion.

But though on this occasion, Theodore could find nobody at home, it was his happiness to meet somebody abroad, and this was no other than his ingenious and versatile friend Dr. Grimwood, whose name has been already mentioned in this narrative. The Doctor, notwithstanding his multifarious occupations in tragedy, comedy, epic poetry and county history, could find time to walk to and fro in the streets of the great metropolis, and oftentimes did he observe to his friends in his own peculiar style of humour, that the world was his study; and undoubtedly a very good study it is; for there is plenty of room in it, and it is as much calculated to suggest variety of thoughts as a whole library of books.

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Generally speaking, Theodore Clarke cared as little for Dr. Grimwood, as he did for any of his acquaintances, but as a companion to pass away a few hours when no one else was within reach, Theodore was very glad of him. At this moment the parties met very opportunely, for the Doctor had picked up a piece of gossip, and Theodore wanted to find some one to talk to; when therefore, they encountered each other, it was with more than usual cordiality. "You are the very man I was wishing to see," was the exclamation that burst spontaneously and unanimously from the lips of them both; and therefore they rapidly tumbled over the common places of the day, and they talked of newspapers, and magazines, and new plays, and epic poems, and county histories.

"But pray," said the Doctor, "have you seen or heard any thing of late, of your friend Stratton?"

"Yes," replied Theodore, "I saw him this very morning, and was to have spent the day

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with him, but he was unexpectedly called into the city upon business."

"And have you any notion, what that business was?"

"I can't say," answered Clarke, "that I have. You know I never trouble my head about other people's affairs."

"And therefore, peradventure," said the Doctor smiling, "you don't wish to know: and if I were to begin to tell you some curious passagess in that young gentleman's history, you would hardly listen to me with patience, but tell me to hold my tongue and mind my own business."

"No, I am not quite so indifferent and incurious as that; but you know I don't give myself much trouble about matters which do not concern me."

"Yes, and I also know that you are not over partial to taking much trouble in matters which do concern you; so do not, I pray you, make a merit of your indolence. All people

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are pleased enough with a bit of private history, though some may take more trouble to find it out than others do. Now, Master Clarke, observe me; I tell you, that there are myriads of indolent blockheads who pass for very good sort of people by virtue of their indolence." Dr. Grimwood here caught hold of Theodore's button, and proceeded: "There is your contented man, who is proud of his virtue of contentment, when he ought to be ashamed of his vice of idleness. He will saunter about the streets in a threadbare coat, and shoes that can scarcely resist the wet, and indulge himself with sneers at the well-dressed busy ones that pass him on foot, or the more opulent ones who ride in their carriages. He will sit down to a ricketty table, and a dirty table-cloth, and an ill-dressed dinner, and say that he is no epicure, and sneer at those who cannot make as good a dinner of a mutton-chop as of three courses. Why, Sir, this man has the same appetites as the rest of the world, and the same desires, but

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he is too lazy to exert himself, and he calls this contentment. I think, I will write an essay on this subject."

"I think you said so about ten years ago, Doctor," replied Theodore Clark.

"Why, yes, yes, yes," replied the Doctor, almost angrily, "perhaps I did; but I can do it better now than I could then, for I have collected more materials, and my judgment is more matured now than it was then."

"But don't you think that ten years hence you may be able to do it better still? Will not your judgment be yet more matured, and your materials more abundant?"

The Doctor smiled, and said, "Ay, ay, you are a wag. I don't mind what you say. But is it not true, what I am saying?"

"Certainly," answered Theodore; "so true, that it has been said and written ten thousand times over during the last hundred years."

"Yes," replied the Doctor, "no doubt; but

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there is a peculiar mode of saying things of this kind."

"Undoubtedly," said Theodore, with affected gravity, and looking at the same time at the Doctor's threadbare coat, "and there is also a peculiar mode of illustrating them."

"There is so," answered the Doctor, "and I think I have that peculiar mode. I don't take any merit to myself; it is only a knack, you know; but still I think I have it."

"Clearly so," answered Theodore; "but all this time, what is become of your secret concerning my friend Mr. Stratton? You just now threatened me with a piece of information, and I do not find that it is forthcoming."

"Oh, you are beginning to be impatient now;—well, well! I will set you at rest. You must know then that I happened to call this morning upon our friend Spratt, and from him I heard that Stratton was at Riddleton's conversazione last night."

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"You might have learnt that from me," interrupted Theodore, "for I was there with him."

"But that's not all."

"If it is, it is no great secret."

"Well, well! but let me go on. Spratt told me that there was also a young lady in the room who attracted his notice very much."

"That also I know," added Theodore.

"But do you also know," asked the Doctor, "that the young lady is an heiress, and that your friend Stratton is not worth a shilling in the world?"

"The former may be true enough," said Theodore, "but as for Stratton having no property, I don't believe a word of it; he is an only son, and his father has a very handsome estate."

"Say rather that he had," replied Dr. Grimwood, "but every sixpence of it is gone; and that is the business that brings him up to London now."

"And may I ask you," said Theodore

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Clarke, with a tone of incredulity, "where you obtained this curious intelligence?"

"From Spratt," answered the Doctor, "and Spratt had it from the best authority, from an intimate friend of the lawyer who has been employed to settle Mr. Stratton's affairs. And now this young Stratton is, for want of better employment, turned fortune-hunter. Spratt says that he shall make a point of informing Mr. Riddleton, that he may send the young lady out of the way."

Theodore Clarke hardly knew whether to believe or to disbelieve this story; he certainly had in the first instance some suspicion of pecuniary embarrassment on the part of Mr. Stratton the elder, and he also thought that there was something ominous in the alarmed state of mind in which Hartley and his friend did that morning leave the hotel. But Theodore was generally a very candid man, and he looked upon Frederick Stratton as one of his most valuable friends, inasmuch as not-

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withstanding his former vagaries he was a man of good family, and apparently of consideration. Therefore did not Mr. Clarke very readily believe any thing to the disrepute of the young gentleman; but in the present instance, had not the means of flatly and pointedly contradicting what the Doctor had asserted. As Theodore had made the world his study, as well as the Doctor, he did not start with great incredulity from the insinuation that Frederick had turned fortune-hunter; but still he knew so much of that young gentleman, that he thought him of all men least likely to stoop to such a pursuit. Yet after all it was no business of his, and he therefore said, "Well, and if it be the case, I cannot say that I see any great evil in it. Frederick Stratton is a man of good sense and good manners, and if he had a fortune he would spend it like a gentleman. As for the young lady, I did not see her, but if she has a good understanding and agreeable manners, she will not be ill-

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matched, and where there is fortune enough for two, it is all very well that it should be so disposed of."

"That is very easy talk, Master Clarke, but the world does not generally approve of such disposals, and if you were the guardian of a young lady of fortune, you would not approve of her bestowing her hand on a gay young man, who had nothing but his own confidence to recommend him."

"If I were guardian to a young lady of fortune, I should not approve of her bestowing her hand on any one but myself."

The Doctor shrugged up his shoulders, shook his head, and took a pinch of snuff, saying; "Yes, yes, young man, I know that your ideas are very strange, but you are young, you will know better when you grow older."

"I shall fancy that I know better, whether I do or not. I don't apprehend that any one imagines that he changes his mind for the worse. But at all events, I think it very impertinent

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of Spratt to interfere or trouble his head about the matter."

With this remark, the narrative must now dismiss these speakers, and turn again its attention to the Captain and his young friend. On their return to the hotel, they found letters from Nettlethorpe, and these gave a much more pleasing account of the state of Mr. Stratton's mind than Frederick had expected, and the young man had great pleasure in replying to the communication from home, in such terms, and with such information, as would still more revive the spirits of his father. There was also a letter from Laura to her brother, in which a wish was expressed on behalf of her mother that some farther apology should be made to Captain Hartley for the uncourteous behaviour of Mr. Stratton; and, what was at that moment of still greater importance than all else, means were abundantly supplied by Mr. Stratton for satisfying or at least pacifying the legal adviser of Mr. Shepherd.

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So delighted was Frederick at this opportune arrival, that he resolved immediately on returning to Shepherd's lodgings, and getting rid of the business at once; and when he did return there, he saw a scene which he little anticipated.

Before he entered the room, he heard loud voices, and one much louder than the rest, that sounded to his ear like the voice of a female. As he was not particularly partial to broils, he would fain have waited on the outside of the door till the storm should be a little abated; but there did not appear any great symptoms of a calm; and in some of the words which he imperfectly and indistinctly heard, there seemed to be a meaning of a curious nature, which was highly interesting to him. He thought that he heard the female say, "He knows I am his lawful wife."

Frederick listened more attentively, and he was confident that he heard these words. Without more delay he opened the door and

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let himself into Mr. Shepherd's apartment. There stood Mr. Shepherd as pale as an addled egg, and protesting by all that was good, bad and indifferent, "that he never had no intention to deceive nobody." Opposite to him on the other side of the table, stood a middle-aged vulgar woman, with unusually gay decorations of dress, but, as if totally regardless of her splendid attire, swearing to the poor frightened man; "You know you are, willan! What business had you to come over to England for? You never intended to come back, you didn't."

The legal adviser, who, though endeavouring to pacify the noisy woman, was the first of the party who saw Frederick Stratton enter the room, and fain would he have stopped the woman's eloquence and have recalled what she had said; but it was manifestly too late. Not many seconds, however, had elapsed, before the whole party were conscious of the presence of Frederick Stratton; but the lady knew not who he

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was; she took him for another lawyer, and having been very angry at the exorbitant demands of the lawyer she had first seen, she felt no great sentiment of courtesy towards another. Very abruptly and rudely, therefore, did she exclaim, as soon as she saw him: "Is this another of your imposing attorneys?"

"No, my dear," thoughtlessly said Mr. Shepherd, "this is——"

"Pray!" interrupted Frederick Stratton; "may I take the liberty to ask who this lady is?"

The lawyer and Mr. Shepherd both began at once to answer the question, but the lady caught the speaker's eye, and as her voice was the shrillest, and her utterance the quickest, she manifestly had the advantage of them, and she over-crowed them both, saying, "I am that fellow's lawful wedded wife, that's what I am, and I was married to him in Shoreditch church, as he knows."

The lawyer and his client interrupted the

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poor woman in the flow of her eloquence, protesting that she was an impostor; but the lady would not be persuaded of any such thing, and in proportion to the protestations of the others, were her exclamations and almost execrations. "Impostor! yes, yes," cried she, "you're a pretty fellow to talk about impostors. Oh, you willan! Sir," said she, "turning to Frederick Stratton, "I'll tell you how that willan has sarved me. I'll tell you all his history."

Here the legal adviser interposed, and said that the gentleman did not wish to know the history; but the gentleman did wish to know it, and moreover, he was determined he would know it if he possibly could, for it occurred to him that here were some secrets worth knowing. When the lawyer therefore took him aside, and said, "Mr. Stratton, give me leave to send this poor woman away, and then I will explain every thing to your satisfaction," Mr. Stratton could not help saying

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in reply, "I should also like to hear what this woman has to say for herself."

"You see, Sir," said the lawyer, "that the poor creature is in a state of intoxication; she absolutely does not know what she is talking about."

Though it was manifest that the lady was not perfectly sober, it did not follow in Frederick's mode of reasoning that she did not know what she was talking about. He had, however, no doubt that the lawyer knew well enough what he was talking about. Sufficient, in fact had passed, to let Frederick see that there was a something which the lawyer wished to conceal. Frederick, therefore, said to the lawyer, in a low but firm voice, "You will lose nothing by letting me come at the truth, and you may perhaps find me quite as profitable a client as that simpleton."

There was something in the tone of the young gentleman's voice, and something in the prospect of a client that had money to pay

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withal, which contributed much to soften and convert the man of law. He suffered himself to be persuaded, and he returned to Mr. Shepherd, who was patiently enduring the voluminous rebukes of the finely-dressed lady, and said to him, "Now, Mr. Shepherd, as matters stand, and as the discovery has been unfortunately made, you had better throw yourself on the liberality of Mr. Stratton."

On hearing the name of Stratton, the lady started and screamed with overwhelming surprise, and exclaimed—"Mr. Stratton? Law, Sir, I 'm sure I didn't know you; and how should I, for I never see you afore? And I never would have been so ill-mannerly, if I had known it had been you."

"And I suppose, Madam," replied Frederick, "that you would not have protested that you were the lawful wife of that gentleman, if you had known that I had been present to hear you?"

Mrs. Shepherd, for that verily was the lady's

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name, looked very foolish, but had cunning enough to assume a look of mock humility, and to say, "Why, Sir, I ought almost to be ashamed of myself, to have told such a wicked story, as to say that I am that gentleman's lawful wife; though where we lives, which is abroad, you know, I certainly pass as his wife."

"You pass as that gentleman's wife, Madam?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And if you only pass as that gentleman's wife, will you be kind enough to inform me why you just this moment reminded that gentleman that you were married at Shoreditch Church?"

"Did I say so, Sir?" replied the lady, who seemed quite at a loss how to get out of the difficulty.

"Yes, Madam, you did say so; and I shall very shortly make the necessary inquiries. I have heard and seen enough to convince me that my father has been infamously imposed upon." Then directing his speech to Mr. Shep-

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herd, he said, "Look you here, Mr. Shepherd; you have completely outwitted yourself; for if you had remained abroad, your annuity would have been remitted to you, and you might have enjoyed yourself quietly; but your covetousness has now been the ruin of you."

Thereupon Mr. Shepherd's hair would have stood on end, but it had never been used to that sort of thing: the poor man turned paler and paler, and trembled like an aspen-leaf, as the saying is. Mrs. Shepherd also put on a look of pathetic supplication, and poured forth a flood of extempore tears, and sobbed and hiccupped, and sighed, and groaned, till she almost sobered herself.

Frederick Stratton was not so partial to pathos as to wish to be long a witness to this exhibition; he therefore calmly turned, and addressed himself to Mr. Shepherd's legal adviser, saying, "Now, Sir, if you will accept of me for a client, I will discharge the bill which this foolish man has contracted, and I will

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thank you, at your earliest convenience, to procure me a certificate of the marriage of this worthy couple."

Shepherd then faintly exclaimed, " Sir, Sir, I will confess all, I will indeed, Sir." Shepherd then fell on his knees, and confessed that the lady then present was his first and only lawful wife. And thereupon Frederick Stratton was beyond measure astonished: he who had so lately ridiculed and despised the institutions of civil society, now felt shocked at the unprincipled conduct of one who had violated these institutions.

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CHAPTER XV.

THERE is a truth in the remark, that we never think closely till we have felt deeply; and there is an intellectual as well as a moral discipline in the pains bodily and mental to which mortals are exposed. Of many of the habits and institutions of society, Frederick Stratton thought nothing, or worse than nothing, till he had felt, at least by sympathy, the pains and troubles arising from a violation and neglect of them. Then, however, was he convinced of their value, when he felt how great a relief rose to his mind from the consideration that his father was now rescued from a perplexity that had long painfully weighed upon his spirits.

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And now the young gentleman would fain have returned home to enjoy the pleasure and satisfaction of having brought the business to something of a conclusion, but the promise which he had given Mr. Brownlow of paying him a visit before returning to Nettlethorpe, and the hope of again meeting the lovely one whom he had seen at the *conversazione*, induced him to delay his journey to Nettlethorpe. Previously, however, to his visit to Mr. Brownlow, he took care to have possession of such documents as might be necessary to satisfy his father of the verity of the discovery which had been made; and when these, with all proper vouchers had been dispatched to Nettlethorpe, Frederick hastened to pay his respects to his newly formed acquaintance.

The house in which Mr. Brownlow resided was a plain, modern, brick-built mansion, not very large nor by any means ostentatious; but it had a comfortable appearance, and to the imagination of the young man, which by recent

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events had been somewhat subtilized and excited, its aspect was that of welcome and cordiality, and he thought the look of it far more comfortable than a gypsey's tent. Mr. Brownlow was a truly courteous man, and he met his visitor on the threshold and took him cordially by the hand, thanking him for the visit.

"Now, my good Sir," said Mr. Brownlow, after the first salutation, "I have made free to invite a party of friends to dine with us to-day, and I have one favour to ask of you, and that is, as my guests are all thoroughly loyal and orthodox, that you will not say a word about rectification of the principles and habits of society."

Frederick smiled, and said, "I will take care to govern myself on that point as well as I can; but I have not relinquished the opinion that there is need of rectification; though, as to the nature of the rectification that is required, my opinion is very much changed indeed."

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"Well," answered Mr. Brownlow, "you will excuse the liberty I take, but we shall have at table to-day a curate who does the duty of two parishes for an income of about one-tenth of what is paid to the rector for the duty of one of the parishes; that rector will also dine with us."

This was rather provoking and exciting to Frederick Stratton. With a little cadence of expostulation, he said, "Really, Sir, do you not think that is a matter which needs correction?"

"The curate thinks so no doubt, and the rector thinks not, quite as positively," answered Mr. Brownlow; "of this we may be sure, that you and I can do little towards it by discussing the matter at or after dinner to-day."

They had scarcely seated themselves, when it was observed, that it was time to prepare for dinner; and though Frederick took it for granted, that the party to be collected at the dinner-table was for the purpose of entertain-

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ment, yet he could not help thinking that he should be much better entertained by Mr. Brownlow himself, than by an assemblage of most loyal people living in the country. Frederick was not to be called disloyal, radical, or jacobinical, in the most ungentlemanlike sense of the terms; but, on the other hand, he did not quite sympathize with that blind, blundering, go-cart loyalty, which flourishes to such high perfection among comfortable people in the country. Nevertheless, with whatever plausibility the young gentleman might reason with himself, as touching the emptiness of common-place people, he was manifestly wrong, either in his estimate of the species, or in his arrangement of the individuals. It is easy enough, especially for young men, to talk with fluency, about common-place people. All people at a little distance, and of whom we know nothing, are common-place; but when inspected more closely, and watched more narrowly, and conversed with more freely and sociably, they

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forthwith start up into character. It is common enough to hear some individuals designated as characters; in truth, all are characters, but it is not every eye that can or will see it. There are, perhaps, no two persons in the universe precisely alike in every trait and feature; there may be much similarity in many points, but there is not a perfect coincidence in all. But young men, and especially those young men who fancy themselves to be geniuses, or have an ambition after intellectual distinction, which they mistake for intellectual eminence, do sneer contemptuously on such as sympathize not with their own peculiar curve of singularity. There was something of this fault in Frederick Stratton. As, however, he had oftentimes conversed with would-be geniuses, he did not estimate them quite so highly as he had done; and in proportion to his abatement of reverence for one class was the rise of his regard for another. It was not, therefore, with a perfect and utter abhorrence of his expected company that he

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met them, as, one by one, they were introduced to him.

It is good for us that there is in the world such an interesting variety of character; it gives a wonderful interest to our being, and a mighty stimulus to our thoughts; and while, by exercising and even provoking our powers of discrimination, it strengthens the understanding, it also gives us moral improvement, by affording us lessons of charity and candour. Not any one thing in the whole compass of the moral world tends more to soften the rigidity of our judgment, than what is called a consideration of circumstances; that is, a reference to the variety of essential character.

The first individual of the party who was introduced to Frederick Stratton, was a tall well-proportioned, cheerful-looking man, obviously a clergyman. Now the young man did not know whether this was the rector or the curate; he wished it might be the curate, for he liked the looks of the man so well, that

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he could not feel as angry with him as he ought to feel with one who had a large income for not doing any duty. Another clerical stranger was introduced to him; and this second was not a contrast to the first. There was a difference, but it was not so marked a difference as between black and white. The one did not look ten times better clothed, ten times better fed, ten times more cheerful, or ten times more polite than the other; in fact, there did not appear to be that difference between them, which Frederick Stratton thought there should be between a rector and a curate; between one who has every thing for doing nothing, and the man who has nothing for doing every thing. All the difference that Frederick could immediately discern was, that the second was not so tall as the first, and that he carried himself rather more stiffly than the other did. This might probably be owing to his shortness of stature, and his reluctance to lose an inch in height. On entering the drawing-room, the

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first of these gentlemen had been introduced to Frederick Stratton by the name of Wright, and the second by the name of Green. In these names there was nothing distinctive, and the young gentleman was not informed by his host as to the rank in which they respectively were situated. Other gentlemen soon arrived, and the party was completed. There were no ladies present; nor was the young man aware whether his host was a married man or not, till Mr. Brownlow expressed to his friends his regret that his young housekeeper was not at home; and the remarks, to which this expression of regret gave rise, led to the information that he was a bachelor, and that his young housekeeper was his ward and niece, in the person of the young lady whom Frederick had seen at Riddleton's *conversazione*.

Frederick Stratton now felt himself peculiarly desirous to make himself agreeable to Mr. Brownlow, and he was scarcely conscious of the excess of compliance to which this desire led

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him. There had been a time in which he would have reprobated most cordially the line of conduct which he now pursued. Alas! how many of the human species are guilty of this kind of transgression, moulding their opinions, and fashioning their feelings, not according to the rectitude of unerring logic, and incontrovertible reason, but according to a more palpable and obvious rule, in which there is no accident of hallucination or blunder; for while the man of logic and pure reason has for his guide the reasonings and movements of the understanding, he may, by an inadvertency and want of thought, overlook some link in the chain of the reasoning, and so be led to an erroneous conclusion, and upon after-examination may regret his want of accuracy: but he that reasons as he feels to be his interest, and as he is led by sympathy with those whom he loves or esteems, is not liable to these errors and inadvertencies; he sees, or at least he feels, his way plainly and distinctly. And in these ob-

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servations there is not intended any vindication of the morality of such conduct, but simply an exposition and explanation of the fact. The individuals too, thus modulated in their feelings, though clearly enough aware of the fact of a revolution of opinion, are by no means so clearly aware of the causes which have effected that revolution; therefore, they do not heed the noisy blarings of those who proclaim the great sin of their apostacy.

It was not, however, in any very decided and positive manner that such effect was produced on the mind of Frederick Stratton. All that is here intended to be affirmed is, simply, that he felt disposed to render himself as agreeable as possibly he could to his new acquaintance Mr. Brownlow; and when, after the cloth was removed, and when Mr. Wright was saying, in tones of satisfaction, to Mr. Brownlow, "I suppose you have heard that I have gained my cause;" and when Mr. Brownlow made answer, saying, "I am very happy to

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hear it: now, that makes your living worth a good fifteen hundred a-year;" Frederick Stratton did not feel outrageous, and ready to burst with a mighty indignation; but he heard it all with patience, more especially, since during the time of dinner, Mr. Wright and he had had friendly conversation, and the clergyman had appeared to him as a man of really good feelings and kind heart.

As, however, Frederick was most decidedly of opinion that there was something essentially and fundamentally wrong in the distribution of church property, and as he felt it almost a duty not to suppress his opinion, from motives of private and personal feeling, he ventured to express, in a rather distant manner, that it would be desirable that the ministers of religion should be remunerated for their services by some mode, which would obviate the necessity of litigation, and prevent those disagreements between a pastor and his flock, which were clearly injurious to religion.

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Mr. Brownlow smiled at the very gentle manner in which the young man alluded to that most delicate topic, and seeing that there was not any great danger of his using language which should be offensive to the reverend gentleman, he very readily took up the subject, and replied, "I have little doubt that they who pay tithes would be glad to be excused the payment; and that they who receive them would be as glad to have the same amount in another form; but whether the nation at large would be thereby a gainer, I have my doubts. The clergy are, as a body, much less rigid in exacting their rights, than any other set of men in the kingdom. Can you tell me, Mr. Wright, what would be the probable amount of your living, if you were to take all the law would give you?"

In a low voice, and with a tone of indifference, the reverend gentleman said, "Perhaps a lay impropriator might make about four hundred a-year more."

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Frederick heard and believed the remark; yet he considered that the system was nevertheless a bad one, though he felt not any violent emotion of indignation against the person then speaking. There came, however, into his mind a very useful and wholesome thought; namely, it occurred to him, that though there were evils in the distribution and arrangement of church property, yet those evils might be not quite so great, nor quite so avoidable, as the declaimers might imagine.

And while he was yet meditating, Mr. Green, who was the curate doing the duty of two parishes, smiled, and said, "It is a remarkable fact, Mr. Brownlow, that the laity who declaim against the clergy for their alledged rapacity and covetousness, should not perceive that they themselves are quite as covetous, and that they are declaiming with selfish feelings against selfishness."

"Clearly so, Mr. Green," answered Mr. Brownlow: "but you know my opinion on

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all these matters perfectly well. The English people are commercial; they are a money-getting people, and their whole notions, and the range of their opinions, are all more or less influenced by this. The clergy are not exempt from it; I am not wishing to flatter you, gentlemen of the cloth, yet I think that the clergy are rather less addicted to this propensity than most other men."

"There is an observable fact," said Mr. Wright, "connected with money, which shows how dearly the English people love it, and how closely they regard it. I allude to the language in which they speak of it. They have a kind of euphemism to hide, as it were, the gross sensuality of it. If a person wishes to borrow money, he asks for a *little assistance*, or he requests to be accommodated with a *trifle*, or he begs the favour of a *loan*. If he asks for payment of money owing, he speaks of *settling that small account;* if he be employed, and wishes for any money from his employer, he

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solicits an *advance*. When a man is rich, he is said to be a *warm* man, or a *good* man; to say nothing of the various slang phrases, such as *coming down with the dust*, *forking out*, and a variety of others, which it is more easy to remember, than polite to repeat; this language shows the feeling with which money is commonly regarded."

"And is not all this an evil?" said Frederick Stratton; "is it not desirable that some means should be used to rectify it?"

At the word rectify, Mr. Brownlow smiled and Frederick faltered.

Mr. Wright replied, "To say that an evil ought to be rectified, is little more than an identical proposition. Every body, of course, wishes every thing to be according to his own mind. This feeling abates, as life advances, and comes upon us again in our second childhood. Infants and children take time to learn that everything will not submit to them; and when people come to the years of maturity,

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they have, for the most part, ascertained the obstinacy of men and things; and when they grow old they forget it, and are again as impatient as children at any thing which contradicts their humour."

"But, Sir," said Frederick, seriously, and with an earnestness which he could not well suppress, "surely you will not say, that when men arrive at years of maturity and discretion, they are of necessity indifferent to truth and falsehood, and careless of good or evil. You surely will not, as a clergyman, affirm that it is not the duty of every individual to do all in his power to remove the evils that are in the world, and to correct the abuses of society."

"Certainly, my friend, I would not, by any means, affirm so wicked a proposition. On the contrary, I do think, and do avow that I think it the duty of every individual to do all the good in his power, to remove as many evils from society as he possibly can; and if any individual, neglecting altogether his own per-

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sonal benefit and advantage, and heedless of his own comfort, should give up the whole of his time, and energies, and talents, for the welfare of society; that man would deserve honour from society, and would procure the commendation of all good men. My fear is, that too few are to be found who will direct their attention to the welfare of society."

"But, Sir," answered Frederick, "you will excuse me, when I say, that from the language which you just now used, I apprehended that you were of that class who regard every grand effort for the welfare of mankind as a piece of mere Quixotism."

"Very far from it, I assure you," said Mr. Wright; "and, so far from blaming you, I rather honour you for the suspicion, because it speaks well for your feelings. I only think that it is desirable, and highly important, that we should be very certain that our efforts are really for that which is good. Don Quixote, you know, fought with a windmill; there was

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something commendable in his zeal, though he lacked judgment. He was confident that he was fighting with a giant, but he was not certain of the fact. He ought first to have been sure that the object against which he directed his military prowess was really an assailable object, and that there was some probability that he should vanquish the enemy. Now that only is to be called Quixotism which directs a blind, unknowing energy against that which is absolutely no evil; or which, being in a degree evil, is either not to be subdued by the means applied, or which can be only removed by greater evil. There is in the world such abundant opportunity for doing real good, and for positively increasing human happiness, and adding to human comfort, that I think it a pity to waste one's time and energy upon uncertain and problematic evils."

"Certainly, Sir," replied Frederick, "you speak rationally and plausibly; but yet it does appear to me, that such kind of reasoning is

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rather likely to be made use of for the purpose of moral apathy. For the removal of great evils there is necessity for the use of great exertions; and men are never likely to become decided benefactors to their species, without feeling something of that ardour which may perhaps be denominated Quixotism. To excel in the fine arts, a certain degree of poetical fervour or inspiration seems essential; and I should apprehend that it does not require less of that feeling to become a distinguished benefactor to mankind."

"But mankind," answered the clergyman, "have many benefactors who are not distinguished, and the more it has of these the better for it; it is for want of undistinguished benefactors that it seems to be in want of distinguished ones. You know the proverb, that if every one mends one, we shall all be mended. This is not, as of course you see, a proposition merely, but it is also a precept. Now only imagine every clergyman, or at least a very

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great proportion of them, paying every possible attention to their flocks; imagine heads of families doing all in their power to promote the welfare of their dependents; and imagine persons in opulent or comfortable circumstances keeping a vigilant and benevolent eye upon their poorer neighbours. Would not much good be done to society? And, on the other hand, conceive of one impatient of this obscure and humble form of usefulness, leaving his own family, neglecting their moral improvement, heeding not his poorer neighbours, but running wildly through the world to remedy what he only imagines to be an evil; uncertain, perhaps, at the same time, that the evil is so great as he imagines it to be, and not knowing whether he may not be doing more harm than good by attempting to remove it. He is uncertain of doing any good to the world at large, but is very certain that he is doing a serious injury to his own family and neighbourhood. He attempts what he cannot accom-

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plish, and neglects what he can and ought to do; to him, therefore, is applicable the reproof, which says, 'That to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.'"

Frederick listened very attentively to Mr. Wright's homily, and, if it produced no other effect upon the young man's mind, it contributed to give him a more favourable opinion of the opulent rector's good feeling than he had entertained before he saw him. Closely looking at mankind robs us of much of the pleasure of romance; we do not see so many monsters as we suspected were in being. Nevertheless, there is something beautiful in the prismatic division of colours melting into each other, which more than counterbalances the loss of the heroic broad lines of black and white.

The conversation was interrupted by an arrival, which must be narrated in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER XVI.

MR. WRIGHT had scarcely finished the speech recorded in the last chapter, when a carriage was heard driving up to the door. "This is a late hour for visitors," said Mr. Brownlow, and presently he was called out of the room, which summons, with an apology to his guests, he obeyed.

The newly-arrived party consisted of Amelia Brownlow, her widowed mother, and Mr. Riddleton.

"What's the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Mr. Brownlow.

Mr. Riddleton, then addressing himself to Amelia, said, "My dear, you had better retire

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to your own room, and your mamma will, perhaps, have the goodness to accompany you."

The advice was immediately taken, and Mr. Riddleton, with a bustling and consequential air, closed the door after them as they departed; and then desired Mr. Brownlow to be seated, which Mr. Brownlow would have done without being desired, seeing that he was in his own house; moreover, he knew Mr. Riddleton so well, that he would never have commenced a conversation with him without sitting, knowing that if he did he would be tired before it was over. When they were seated, Mr. Riddleton rubbed his hands very briskly, looked towards the door very earnestly, and to Mr. Brownlow very mysteriously.

"Cousin," said Mr. Riddleton, "you hardly expected to see us here to-night, I presume?"

"I certainly did not," answered Mr. Brownlow, "but I am very glad to see you."

"That's as it may be, cousin, that's as it may be; but you don't know all yet."

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Mr. Brownlow was aware that he did not know all, and he greatly suspected that it would be some time before he should know all, and he moreover conceived that when he should know all it might not be much worth knowing.

"Cousin," continued Mr. Riddleton, "it is an unpleasant business, a very unpleasant business, I wish it could have been avoided, indeed I do; but I have done what I thought for the best, and if the world blames me, I certainly shall not reproach myself."

"May I ask, then, what it is that has brought you here?"

"Why, cousin, the matter is,—the matter is, that I certainly would have prevented it if I could. And I am sure that nobody could have been more careful than I and Mrs. Riddleton have: we could not have been more attentive and vigilant, if she had been our own child, and indeed not so much so; for there is a responsibility, cousin—there is a responsibility in the case of a ward."

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"I hope nothing has happened to Amelia," said Mr. Brownlow, without any particular agitation, for he did not perceive any great symptoms of sorrow or calamity, either in her looks, or in those of her mother.

"Oh no, no!" answered Mr. Riddleton, with great energy and pomposity of manner, "but you know, cousin, as I said before, there is a responsibility, in the case of a ward—a very serious responsibility; and therefore that has made me more particularly attentive to prevent any thing improper."

"You have always taken very great care of Amelia, that cannot be denied; but is there any danger in the way, that has led you to bring her home at this time?"

"Why yes, cousin, yes, there is danger." Saying thus, Mr. Riddleton again looked towards the door, and drew his seat closer to Mr. Brownlow, and said in a very low tone, as if he was afraid of being heard even by the person to whom he was speaking; "Cousin, I would

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not for all the world that Amelia should know any thing about it—I would not for the world, cousin, I would not for the world!"

"But what is it, Mr. Riddleton? what is it?"

"I don't know that I shall be doing quite right even to tell you; and yet, as you are one of her guardians, you ought to be informed of the matter, that you may know how to act."

"I think you may trust me," said Mr. Brownlow, smilingly.

"Most undoubtedly, cousin, most undoubtedly; you are the most proper person to be informed about it."

In order to expedite the delivery of the secret, Mr. Brownlow said, "But it may take some time to give the whole narration, and as I have some friends in the dining-room, perhaps you will join the party, and the ladies will receive us in the drawing-room; and you and I can then talk the matter over in the evening; for, of course, you will not return to town to-night."

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"Why, cousin, there are objections to that arrangement; I see many objections to that. You know I am by no means partial to your country company, since I have been accustomed to the intellectual society of the metropolis. And then, I think, it will not be advisable for Amelia to show herself to the company, for remarks may be made on the singular fact of her return so unexpectedly: I know that the people in the country are very much given to gossip, and to talk about other people's affairs. But don't let me keep you from your company; I fear I have detained you already."

Mr. Brownlow feared the same, but he knew that all attempts to rectify the evil would only make it worse, so he sat with patience waiting till it should please Mr. Riddleton to unfold the mighty secret. Making a great effort for that purpose, the narrator proceeded, saying, "Well then, cousin, not to detain you any longer; you know that I frequently have a *conversazione* at my house, and that my ob-

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ject is to bring together men of letters and of genius, without any particular reference to rank in life; but, of course, I wish to have the thing tolerably select. Now among these men of letters there is no such thing as drawing a line, they thrust themselves so much into the society of their superiors. There is, however, a distinction to be made, and I wish to make that distinction. But let that pass. Now no one, I imagine, would have the asurance to think, that by being tolerated at such parties, he was thereby admitted to a footing of equality. Should you think so yourself, cousin?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Brownlow, most patiently.

"But, however, you shall hear. You must know Spratt, the man who wrote the celebrated Prize-Essay, to prove the possibility of geese laying golden eggs?"

"I can't say that I do," answered Mr. Brownlow, who saw that it was necessary for him to make some answer.

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"That's nothing to the purpose," pursued Mr. Riddleton; "but he is a very clever fellow I assure you, cousin, a very clever fellow. And when I have a *conversazione* at my house, I generally employ him and Silversides—of course, you know Silversides?"

"I have heard the name," answered Mr. Brownlow, calmly and resignedly as before.

"Only heard the name!" exclaimed Mr. Riddleton; "bless me, cousin Brownlow, you know absolutely nothing, living in the country all your life! You are buried alive, buried alive."

"Well," replied Mr. Brownlow, "that is better than being squeezed to a mummy in a London crowd."

"Ah, very good, cousin, very good! I'll repeat that to Silversides. But let me see, what was I saying—ay, ay, yes—I employ Silversides and Spratt to get me literary recruits, and I accommodate them with an opportunity of introducing their friends, who of course are

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strangers to me. A few days ago I had one of these parties at my house; and I had given cards to Spratt as usual, and I had as usual a miscellaneous party. Silversides was there, and talked delightfully, quite delightfully, cousin. You never heard him, did you?"

"Never," answered Mr. Brownlow, "nor saw him. Does he talk intelligibly."

"I cannot deny," said Mr. Riddleton in a tone of concession, "that he is intelligible; I know he is not so much admired on that account by some persons, but I like him all the better for it."

"So should I," said Mr. Brownlow: "but has this Mr. Silversides taken any advantage of your invitations?"

"Oh, dear no, cousin!" replied Mr. Riddleton; "no such thing: he is the last man in the world to do so. A more respectful and well-behaved man cannot be found than Silversides."

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"Then," replied Mr. Brownlow, "Mr. Silversides has introduced some improper person?"

"No, cousin, no; not Silversides, but Spratt —Spratt, I believe, was the man. Not that he had any suspicion of what would occur; I firmly believe him to be perfectly innocent. Spratt is a very well-behaved man, and of very sound notions on political subjects. But it did so happen—I am sure I cannot account for it—but it did so happen that an individual introduced by Spratt did see Amelia at the *conversazione* and fell in love with her."

Thereupon Mr. Riddleton stopped and looked at his cousin with astonishment, because his cousin did not look at him with astonishment.

Mr. Brownlow, at the pause, said, "And has he made her an offer?"

The astonishment of Mr. Riddleton was increased tenfold at the question, and at the coolness with which it was put, and he said,

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in tones of expostulation, "Cousin, cousin, do you think that I should suffer such a thing under my roof?"

"Why, cousin," replied Mr. Brownlow, "I do not see how you could well help it."

"It is my opinion, cousin—I do not know what other people may think of the matter—but it is my opinion, that the first duty of a guardian is to see that his ward does not improperly fall in love."

"Who is the gentleman," asked Mr. Brownlow, "who has fallen in love with our ward?"

"That," replied Mr. Riddleton, "I cannot tell; for I only know that he is a man of ruined fortune, and seeking for the means of restoring his fortune by marriage."

"Does Amelia know him?"

"By no means; she is not aware of any thing of the kind. I endeavoured to ascertain that, after I had heard the story."

"From whom, then, did you hear the story?"

"From Spratt; and Spratt had it from

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the individual himself. And Spratt, as a friend, gave me a hint to be upon my guard; for he had heard that there had been inquiries made about Amelia by a person of no property and of very dubious connexions. And, cousin, I thought it the wisest step I could take, immediately to bring our ward home to you; and, as your mode of living is more retired than mine, I thought that she might be safest under your roof, which is, indeed, her regular and stated home."

Having so spoken, Mr. Riddleton again rubbed his hands, and looked as if expecting to hear his wisdom duly and gravely commended. Mr. Brownlow merely replied with his usual indifference, "But you will not think of returning to-night?"

"Oh yes, cousin, I must indeed, and I must beg you to order the carriage immediately. But let me implore you, my good and worthy cousin, let me beg and entreat of you, that you do not introduce Amelia to your party to-

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night. Suspicions, you know, may be excited, rumours may fly abroad, perplexities may be occasioned. Indeed, I think it would be best—but of course you know better than I do what steps ought to be taken,—but still, if I might be permitted to suggest, and it is only for Amelia's own good that I do suggest it,—she knows that I have her interest at heart,—it is only for her good, cousin,—it is only for her good that I venture to suggest, that perhaps it might be advisable for a time, only for a time, to keep her in a state of perfect seclusion. But you know best."

"Do you mean," said Mr. Brownlow, "to advise me to lock her up?"

"Why, no," answered Mr. Riddleton; "no, my cousin, I would hardly go so far as that, for that would be attended with many inconveniences, and the poor child might pine or get out of the window. Don't lock her up, poor thing, don't lock her up."

Mr. Brownlow did not laugh, and some cre-

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dit is due to him for that; he said, "Depend upon me, Mr. Riddleton, I will take especial care of her; you know that she has never fallen in love since she has been under my roof."

"No, cousin," said Mr. Riddleton eagerly, "she never has, she never has; and therefore I thought it best to bring her to you. Well, now I am detaining you, so I will take my leave; let me hear from you as soon as you have leisure to write. I feel an interest in the poor child's welfare: I wish her well with all my heart; I do indeed, cousin; and for her sake, if it were necessary, I would give up all my *conversaziones;* but then, what would the world say, cousin; what would the world say, that's the matter?"

The carriage was announced, and Mr. Brownlow was most happy, for he saw some probability that the conference would terminate before midnight. Anybody but Mr. Riddleton would have observed symptoms of impatience in his auditor, but there was with him no suspicion of

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anything of the kind, and he departed most highly delighted with his own dexterity and diplomatic skill.

In compliance with Mr. Riddleton's request, and also at the desire of Amelia herself, Mr. Brownlow did not introduce the young lady to his party that evening, nor did Frederick Stratton know that she was in the house till the party was gone.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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